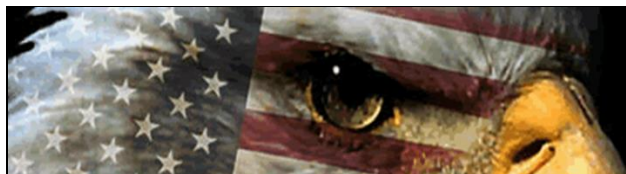



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HEADLINE	01/23 Wagner's brutal tactics in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2023/01/23/europe/russia-wagner-tactics-report-ukraine-intl/index.html
GIST	<p>Wagner Group fighters have become the disposable infantry of the Russian offensive in eastern Ukraine, but a Ukrainian military intelligence document obtained by CNN sets out how effective they have been around the city of Bakhmut – and how difficult they are to fight against.</p> <p>Wagner is a private military contractor run by oligarch Yevgeny Prigozhin, who has been highly visible on the frontlines in recent weeks – and always quick to claim credit for Russian advances. Wagner fighters have been heavily involved in taking Soledar, a few miles northeast of Bakhmut, and areas around the town.</p>

The Ukrainian report – dated December 2022 – concludes that Wagner represents a unique threat at close quarters, even while suffering extraordinary casualties. “The deaths of thousands of Wagner soldiers do not matter to Russian society,” the report asserts.

“Assault groups do not withdraw without a command... Unauthorized withdrawal of a team or without being wounded is punishable by execution on the spot.”

Phone intercepts obtained by a Ukrainian intelligence source and shared with CNN also indicate a merciless attitude on the battlefield. In one, a soldier is heard talking about another who tried to surrender to the Ukrainians.

“The Wagnerians caught him and cut his f**king balls off,” the soldier says.

CNN can’t independently authenticate the call, which is alleged to have taken place in November.

Wounded Wagner fighters are often left on the battlefield for hours, according to the Ukrainian assessment. “Assault infantry is not allowed to carry the wounded off the battlefield on their own, as their main task is to continue the assault until the goal is achieved. If the assault fails, retreat is also allowed only at night.”

Despite a brutal indifference to casualties – demonstrated by [Prigozhin himself](#) – the Ukrainian analysis says that Wagner’s tactics “are the only ones that are effective for the poorly trained mobilized troops that make up the majority of Russian ground forces.”

It suggests the Russian army may even be adapting its tactics to become more like Wagner, saying: “Instead of the classic battalion tactical groups of the Russian Armed Forces, assault units are proposed.”

That would be a significant change to the Russians’ traditional reliance on larger, mechanized units.

On the ground, according to Ukrainian intelligence phone intercepts, some mobilized troops are thinking about switching to Wagner. In one such intercept, a soldier contrasts Wagner with his unit and says: “It’s f**king heaven and earth. So if I’m going to f**king serve, I’d better f**king serve there.”

The Wagner way of war

The Ukrainian report says that [Wagner](#) deploys its forces in mobile groups of about a dozen or fewer, using rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and exploiting real-time drone intelligence, which the report describes as the “key element.”

Another tool the Wagner soldiers have is the use of communications equipment made by Motorola, according to the document.

Motorola told CNN it has suspended all sales to Russia and closed its operations there.

Convicts – tens of [thousands](#) of whom have been recruited by Wagner – frequently form the first wave in an attack and take the heaviest casualties – as high as 80% according to Ukrainian officials.

More experienced fighters, with thermal imagery and night-vision equipment, follow.

For the Ukrainians, their own drone intelligence is critical to prevent their trenches being overwhelmed by grenade attacks. The document recounts an incident in December in which a drone spotted an advancing Wagner group, allowing Ukrainian defenses to eliminate it before its troops were able to fire RPGs.

If Wagner forces succeed in taking a position, artillery support allows them to dig foxholes and consolidate their gains, but those foxholes are very vulnerable to attack in open land. And again – according to Ukrainian intercepts – coordination between Wagner and the Russian military is often

lacking. In one intercepted call – again not verifiable – a soldier told his father that his unit had mistakenly taken out a Wagner vehicle.

Prigozhin has repeatedly insisted that his fighters were responsible for capturing the town of Soledar and nearby settlements in the past week, the first Russian military gains in months. “No units other than Wagner PMC operatives were involved in the storming of Soledar,” he claimed.

Wagner’s performance is Prigozhin’s route to more resources and is instrumental in his ongoing battle with the Russian military establishment, which he has frequently criticized as inept and corrupt.

According to UK intelligence, Russian military chief of staff Valery Gerasimov gave orders that soldiers should be better turned out. Prigozhin responded that “war is the time of the active and courageous, and not of the clean-shaven.”

Commenting on the new Gerasimov strictures, the UK Defense Ministry said Monday: “The Russian force continues to endure operational deadlock and heavy casualties; Gerasimov’s prioritisation of largely minor regulations is likely to confirm the fears of his many sceptics in Russia.”

Gerasimov was appointed the overall commander of Russia’s so-called “special military operation” in Ukraine earlier this month amid mounting criticism of its faltering progress.

So long as the Russian defense ministry underperforms, Prigozhin will snap at its heels and demand more resources for Wagner.

The group also appears able to gain weapons by other means. US officials said last week that Wagner had sourced arms from North Korea. “Last month, North Korea delivered infantry rockets and missiles into Russia for use by Wagner,” National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said.

The new Rasputin?

Prigozhin is not short of ambition. As he stood in Soledar last week, he declared that Wagner was probably “the most experienced army in the world today.”

He claimed its forces already had multiple launch rocket systems, their own air defenses and artillery.

Prigozhin also made a subtle comparison between Wagner and the top-down rigidity of the Russian military, saying that “everyone who is on the ground is listened to. Commanders consult with the fighters, and the PMC (private military company) leadership consults with the commanders.”

“That is why the Wagner PMC has moved forward and will continue to move forward.”

Two months ago, Andrei Kolesnikov, senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace likened Prigozhin’s growing influence to that of Grigori Rasputin at the court of Tsar Nicholas II. “Putin needs military effectiveness at any cost,” he told Current Time TV.

“There is a negative diabolical charisma in [Prigozhin], and in a sense this charisma can compete with Putin’s. Putin now needs him in this capacity, in this form.”

Prigozhin appears to have been intrigued by the comparison with Rasputin, a mystical figure who treated the Tsar’s son for hemophilia, the bleeding disorder. But in comments this weekend published by his company Concord, he had his own typical twist on it.

“Unfortunately, I do not staunch blood flow. I bleed the enemies of our motherland. And not by incantations, but by direct contact with them.”

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/23/us/tyre-nichols-memphis-police-dead.html
GIST	<p>Tyre Nichols, 29, was beaten by Memphis police officers for three minutes on Jan. 7 after the officers had stopped him for reckless driving, lawyers for his family said on Monday. The stop escalated into a violent confrontation that ended with Mr. Nichols hospitalized in critical condition. Three days later, he died.</p> <p>The circumstances of the traffic stop remain murky, as officials have disclosed little information. But Mr. Nichols's death has stoked anger and frustration in Memphis as his family, their lawyers and activists seek answers.</p> <p>Memphis is now waiting for the release of video footage of the stop, which city officials have vowed to make public. Mr. Nichols's family and their lawyers watched the video on Monday. In it, they could see that Mr. Nichols, who was Black, had been pepper sprayed, shocked with a stun gun and restrained, Antonio Romanucci, one of the lawyers, told reporters after watching the footage.</p> <p>The police, in an initial statement, said that a "confrontation occurred" as the officers, all of whom are also Black, approached Mr. Nichols's vehicle on the evening of Jan. 7 and he ran away. There was then "another confrontation" as officers arrested him, the statement said.</p> <p>"He was a human piñata for those police officers," Mr. Romanucci said Monday, standing with Mr. Nichols's mother, RowVaughn Wells. "Not only was it violent, it was savage."</p> <p>What is the status of the investigation into Mr. Nichols's death?</p> <p>State and federal investigations are underway as prosecutors determine whether to pursue criminal charges against the officers who were involved in the stop. An internal investigation by the Memphis Police Department has already found that the officers used excessive force and failed to intervene or provide help.</p> <p>On Friday, the department announced that the five officers involved — Tadarrius Bean, Demetrius Haley, Emmitt Martin III, Desmond Mills Jr. and Justin Smith — had been fired. The officers had all joined the department between 2017 and 2020.</p> <p>"The egregious nature of this incident is not a reflection of the good work that our officers perform, with integrity, every day," Cerelyn Davis, the Memphis police chief, said in a statement.</p> <p>The Memphis Police Association, the union representing the city's officers, declined to comment on the firings. "The citizens of Memphis, and, more importantly, the family of Mr. Nichols deserve to know the complete account of the events leading up to his death" and what may have contributed to it, Lt. Essica Cage-Rosario, the union's president, said in a statement.</p> <p>Mr. Nichols's family is pushing for the officers to be charged with first-degree murder. "Anything short of that we will not accept," Rodney Wells, Mr. Nichols's stepfather, said at a news conference on Monday after watching the videos, which he described as "horrific."</p> <p>Who was Tyre Nichols?</p> <p>Mr. Nichols worked the second shift at a FedEx facility, the shipping company that is a major employer and corporate presence in Memphis. Every evening, around 7 p.m., he would return to his mother's house for his "lunch" break, according to his family. He had worked there for roughly nine months.</p> <p>He had a 4-year-old son. He went to the same Starbucks most mornings around 8:30 a.m., his mother said. He often went to Shelby Farms, a sprawling public park just outside Memphis. He photographed sunsets and skateboarded, a passion that he'd had since he was 6 — one his stepfather thought he was too old for. "You've got to put that skateboard down," Mr. Wells remembered telling Mr. Nichols not long before he died. "You've got a full-time job now."</p> <p>His mother said that Mr. Nichols had her name tattooed on his arm. "That made me proud," she said. "Most kids don't put their mom's name. My son was a beautiful soul."</p>

According to the family's lawyers, Mr. Nichols told the officers during the Jan. 7 events that he just wanted to go home, and in what they believed were his final words, he called out for his mother. Her home was about 100 yards from where he was beaten, the lawyers said.

When will the video of the incident be released?

City officials have promised transparency, including the public release of the footage of the beating. But the timing for that remains unclear. It could be an additional week, at least, the family's lawyers said. Other details are also uncertain, such as how much footage is being released and whether it is only from the officers' body cameras or includes other sources.

Mr. Nichols's family has urged the community to give officials time to finish their investigation.

But on Monday, they and their lawyers shared some of what they had seen on the video.

"His mother couldn't get through the first minute of it," Ben Crump, a civil rights lawyer who is representing the family, said in the news conference. "What we can tell you about the video is that it is appalling, it is deplorable, it is heinous."

Mr. Crump said Mr. Nichols had pleaded with officers for an explanation of why he had been stopped before things escalated.

"What did I do?" — that was his question," Mr. Crump said. "What did I do?"

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HEADLINE	01/24 Snowless winter in parts of Northeast
SOURCE	https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/weather/2023/01/24/winter-weather-new-york-washington-philadelphia-snow/11107896002/
GIST	<p>Although parts of the United States have seen historic winter weather this season, other cities have been left wondering: where is the snow?</p> <p>In Washington, D.C., residents of the nation's capital haven't seen measurable snow this winter. New York City also has yet to see its typical snow this season, in addition to Philadelphia and other parts of the Northeast.</p> <p>"That whole corridor – New York, Philly, Baltimore, D.C. – they haven't had any accumulating snow yet, which is highly unusual," Tom Kines, senior meteorologist at AccuWeather, said. "And even up into Boston, even though it's snowing up there (Monday), they haven't had a whole lot of snow there either."</p> <p>"The whole I-95 corridor has been kind of in a snow drought this winter," he said.</p> <p>The average accumulation through about the third week in January for the Big Apple is 10.6 inches of snow, according to AccuWeather. Philadelphia sees an average of 7.8 inches, while Washington sees an average of 4.6 inches.</p> <p>So far this winter, each city has seen only a trace of flakes.</p> <p>But why haven't these East Coast cities seen many snowflakes? Will the area see snow at all this winter? Here's what you need to know.</p> <p>Will New York, Washington see snow this week?</p> <p>Kines said New York has the "best chance of a lot of those cities" of seeing accumulating snow into Wednesday.</p>

"It looks like it's going to be snow changing to rain in New York City. It's just a matter of whether it's 35 degrees and snowing or 31 and snowing. Obviously if it's 35 and snowing, it's not going to accumulate, where if it's 31 it certainly will," he said.

"A couple of degrees in temperature is going to make a big difference come Wednesday in New York whether they continue to keep that snow drought going."

Meanwhile, Philadelphia could see rain and snow before noon on Wednesday, with snow and sleet accumulation of less than a half inch possible, [according to the National Weather Service](#). And Washington and Baltimore, Maryland, on Wednesday are [only expected to see rain](#).

What about later this winter and spring?

Kines said the tracks of several storms this winter haven't hit the I-95 corridor.

"There's been a lot of storms that have maybe gone through Texas and up through Tennessee and into western Pennsylvania. Those are the kind of tracks that keep the I-95 corridor in the mild weather. We haven't seen anything unusual at least in the mid-Atlantic or northeast about the storm tracks," he said.

He noted that AccuWeather is calling for above normal temperatures in February, with some potential "chilly weather returning in March."

[The Environmental Protection Agency](#) also warns that total snowfall has decreased in some parts of the country over the last nearly 100 years, explaining that "In addition to changing the overall rate of precipitation, climate change can lead to changes in the type of precipitation."

The EPA says the Pacific Northwest has seen a decline in total snowfall and the "proportion of precipitation falling as snow." Some areas have seen increases, such as parts of the Great Lakes region.

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HEADLINE	01/23 High expectation of recession in 2023
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2023/01/23/national-association-business-economics-inflation-wages/3341674517869/
GIST	<p>Jan. 23 (UPI) -- Most economists and business leaders still expect a recession in the United States in 2023, according to a survey by the National Association of Business Economics.</p> <p>Sixty members of NABE, which includes economists, government officials, business leaders and consultants, responded to the January survey on business conditions. The survey pertains to the fourth quarter of 2022.</p> <p>More than half said there is more than a 50% chance of a recession this year. The rate of responses predicting a recession is smaller than it was at the end of the third quarter, when 63% expected a recession. About 3% believe the recession already has begun.</p> <p>Many of the respondents are prepared for the recession to come quickly, NABE president and founder Julia Coronado said.</p> <p>"For the first time since 2020, more respondents expect falling rather than increased employment at their firms in the next three months," she said.</p> <p>"Fewer respondents than in recent years expect their firms' capital spending to increase in the same period," she said.</p> <p>The NABE survey reflected data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics on increasing wages, though wages are not keeping pace with inflation in most positions. Sixty-three percent said wages increased in the fourth quarter of 2022.</p>

	<p>Survey Chair Carlos Herrera said the results suggest an "easing" of inflation while material costs are driven down. Costs are projected to fall in the first quarter of 2023, as well, though economic indicators are still difficult to get a bead on, Herrera said.</p> <p>"The survey results reveal an unevenness across indicators," he said.</p> <p>"Wages rose at a majority of respondents' firms in the last three months of 2022 and more firms added workers than reduced headcounts. But far more firms than in the past three years reported falling profit margins."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/24 Turkey: no support for Sweden to NATO
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2023/01/24/Turkey-Sweden-NATO-anti-Muslim-protests/6421674560762/
GIST	<p>Jan. 24 (UPI) -- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he will not support Sweden's entry into NATO after anti-Muslim protests in Stockholm over the weekend.</p> <p>Turkey has long questioned Sweden and Finland's application into the military alliance but the protests -- which included the burning of the Quran and hanging of an effigy of Erdogan near the Turkish embassy, heightened tensions.</p> <p>The protest, organized by Danish far-right leader Rasmus Paludan, was reportedly in support of the Kurdistan Workers Party, of PKK. The party is considered a terrorist organization in Turkey and much of the Western world.</p> <p>"Sweden should not expect support from us for NATO," Erdogan said in response to the Stockholm protest during a news conference on Monday. "It is clear that those who caused such a disgrace in front of our country's embassy can no longer expect any benevolence from us regarding their application."</p> <p>Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine last February and remain under review.</p> <p>Sweden cannot join the 30-country military security alliance, created in 1949 after World War II, without Turkey's approval.</p> <p>Turkey had previously said it would grant Sweden approval but Erdogan threatened to reverse that decision if Sweden did not follow through on a series of conditions including prohibiting participation in the PKK.</p> <p>The Swedish government condemned the rally and added that its free speech laws prevented them from banning it.</p> <p>"Sweden has a far-reaching freedom of expression, but it does not imply that the Swedish government, or myself, support the opinions expressed," Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said.</p> <p>Billstrom added that Sweden will "respect the agreement that exists between Sweden, Finland and Turkey regarding our NATO membership."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/24 Nigeria bets on China-funded port
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-government-china-muhammadu-buhari-lagos-b925ec9a4569da06d7e73a90993f64e0

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has marked the opening of a \$1.5 billion, Chinese-funded deep seaport in the commercial hub of Lagos that authorities hope will help grow the West African nation's ailing economy.

The Lekki Deep Sea Port is one of the biggest in West Africa and will create hundreds of thousands of jobs in addition to easing cargo congestion that costs billions of dollars in annual revenue, Lagos Gov. Babajide Sanwo-Olu said Monday.

The port — whose container terminal is able to handle at least 2.5 million 20-foot standard containers per year — will be operated as a joint venture between the Nigerian government, Lagos state, Singapore-based Tolaram Group and state-owned China Harbor Engineering Company. Both foreign companies own a majority stake of 75% in the project.

Nigeria is Africa's largest economy but growth has been stalled for many years because of poor infrastructure and mismanagement. Although it has six major seaports, more than 80% of the country's imports are handled by just two of the ports in Lagos, where congestion has led to a massive loss in revenue as cargoes are often diverted to other West African nations.

Authorities say the new deep seaport on the eastern edge of Lagos would divert traffic from congested ports and shore up earnings, with expected economic benefits of more than \$360 billion.

Experts, however, argue it would make a "minimal difference" if existing pitfalls are not removed, including ensuring connections between ports and inland areas.

"There is poor and underinvested rail network connectivity, and the roads are not in top-notch condition," said Ayotunde Abiodun, an economic analyst with the Lagos-based SBM Intelligence firm. "Also, the automation of processes at the port must be prioritized."

As the port begins to operate with the first commercial vessel arriving Sunday, the Lagos governor said ships docking at the port "could be up to four times the size of vessels that currently berth at both Tin Can and Apapa ports," the other two ports in Lagos.

The project would drive economic development not just for Lagos but for the entire country, according to Cui Jianchun, Chinese ambassador to Nigeria.

"This is (the) engine of the economy not only for (the) governor of Lagos but also for the Federal Republic of Nigeria," Jianchun said. "This is equity of investment. This is not a loan, this is not borrowing — this is investment."

Agriculture and trade are key drivers of Nigeria's economy, but widespread insecurity in the agricultural-rich north, dwindling foreign direct investments and endemic corruption have slowed economic growth amid reduced earnings from crude oil.

The government has turned to international lenders and funders to help grow the economy through critical projects, among them China, whose footprint are on some of Nigeria's most important infrastructure such as rail networks and airport terminals.

The port has "immense potential" for the economy of Nigeria, which is battling a 33% unemployment rate and an ailing economy, said Abiodun, the analyst who added that industry players must work together for this to happen.

In the maritime sector, "there needs to be interagency engagement on important issues affecting industry operators," Abiodun said. "A more troubling challenge has been the focus of these agencies on revenue generation rather than on value service delivery. This needs to change."

HEADLINE	01/23 Biden document saga heats up
SOURCE	https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2023-01-23/biden-document-saga-heats-up
GIST	<p>Criticisms and calls for investigation are mounting – even among some Democrats – in the aftermath of a fourth search that turned up classified documents in the possession of President Joe Biden.</p> <p>A spokesman for the White House counsel’s office on Monday clarified that a 13-hour FBI search of Biden’s Delaware home on Friday that revealed additional items was conducted at the request of the Biden team, which reached out to the Department of Justice to do a thorough search of “every room” in the home.</p> <p>The president’s personal lawyer said Saturday that documents with classified markings were found, after previous batches of documents dating back to his time as vice president had been reported on at the president’s Washington, D.C., office and Wilmington residence in recent weeks.</p> <p>It was a “planned, consensual search” and an “unprecedented” top-to-bottom scouring of a sitting president’s personal home, Ian Sams, a spokesman for the White House counsel’s office, said Monday.</p> <p>The White House, which has remained largely quiet on the discoveries while directing questions to the Justice Department, where a special counsel has been appointed to investigate the situation, had previously said that the searches of the president’s residence were complete.</p> <p>Meanwhile in Congress, Republican lawmakers – who have been quick to point out how possession of the documents resembles former President Donald Trump’s handling of classified materials, which the Justice Department has likewise appointed a special counsel to look into – have called for congressional oversight of the document situation.</p> <p>“It is troubling that classified documents have been improperly stored at the home of President Biden for at least six years, raising questions about who may have reviewed or had access to classified information,” House Oversight Committee Chairman James Comer of Kentucky wrote in a letter to Biden’s chief of staff last week. The committee reiterated the calls on Monday, writing in a tweet that “Americans need answers now,” following the discovery of additional documents.</p> <p>Accordingly, the White House released a letter to the House Oversight Committee, which has been seeking various documents. The letter, dated Monday, says the documents found at Biden’s home and at his office at the Penn Biden Center at the University of Pennsylvania are all in possession of the Justice Department and National Archives.</p> <p>The White House is reviewing the committee’s other requests “with the goal of seeking to accommodate legitimate oversight interests within the committee’s jurisdiction while also respecting the separation of powers and the constitutional and statutory obligations of the executive branch generally and the White House in particular,” the letter said, in wording that suggested the GOP-led committee might not get everything it asks for.</p> <p>For his part, Attorney General Merrick Garland in his first comments since the search defended its execution against charges of partisanship on Monday.</p> <p>“We do not have different rules for Democrats or Republicans, different rules for the powerful or the powerless, different rules for the rich and for the poor, we apply the facts, and the law in each case in a neutral, non-partisan manner,” Garland reportedly told journalists during an appearance at DOJ headquarters. “That is what we always do.”</p> <p>But even for Democrats, a number of unanswered questions remain.</p> <p>“How many documents are we talking about? Dozens? A handful or hundreds? How serious are they? Why were they taken? Did anyone have access to them?” Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia asked</p>

	<p>on CBS' "Face the Nation," going on to say that "these are the reasons why this independent prosecutor and an investigation is necessary."</p> <p>Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia, another Democrat, told CNN that "it's unbelievable how this could happen," following Friday's search, calling the situation "totally irresponsible." And the top Democrat on the Judiciary Committee, Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, agreed when asked that Biden has lost the "high ground."</p> <p>"When that information is found, it diminishes the stature of any person who is in possession of it because it's not supposed to happen," Durbin told CNN on Sunday. "Whether it was the fault of a staffer or an attorney, it makes no difference – the elected official bears ultimate responsibility."</p> <p>Biden told reporters on Thursday that he had "no regrets" about how the situation has been communicated, adding that in respect to the investigation, "I think you're going to find there's nothing there."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 SODO business owners concern over crime
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/seattle/sodo-businesses-property-crime-concerns-seattle/281-f504c2b1-aa7b-4b39-84d6-3ea5a6c6895b
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Property crime is overwhelming some businesses in Seattle's SODO neighborhood. Landlords and business owners say they are filing police reports, but the criminal activity is not slowing down.</p> <p>Dan Byrne owns four buildings and has tenants in SODO.</p> <p>"This is the location where the lock was broken right here," said Byrne as he showed the damage at one of his properties.</p> <p>The crime, caught on camera about a week ago, shows thieves spending time in the early morning hours at the SODO business.</p> <p>"They take a saw, cut the catalytic converters out, ride away on a bicycle with them," said Byrne. "Who knows where they go?"</p> <p>In addition to catalytic converters, Byrne's tenant lost batteries and fuel too.</p> <p>"We have video of a box truck at three in the morning towing an eco-block which is a 2,000-pound block of concrete, bouncing along here on Dakota Street at 25 miles an hour. You know, just unhampered by anybody," he said.</p> <p>Nearby, at another building Byrne owns, the tenants are tallying their losses too. RD Interiors predominantly does real estate staging. The business is bouncing back after what happened in August.</p> <p>"We caught someone on camera, lighting a bush on fire, and it lit the entire facade in the interior of our building on fire," said General Manager James Chapman. "Thankfully our sprinklers stopped it from getting far back. But it still costs six figures in damage."</p> <p>Chapman adds that it is not just the fire. There have been thefts too.</p> <p>"We actually haven't reported some of this stuff to insurance just because we don't want our rates to go up," he said.</p> <p>As the costs of dealing with crime goes up, the neighborhood is banding together.</p>

"There's 1,200 businesses here in SODO that support Seattle," said Byrne.

"We've been really working with our businesses to report crime, because a lot of them have given up," said Erin Goodman, the Executive Director of the SODO Business Improvement Area.

The [SODO BIA](#) plans to soon bring their concerns to city council, hoping to find help.

"It is almost demoralizing because you feel like no matter how hard you try to create jobs, create a good place for people to work, you've got this man-made kind of problem coming at us that we really just can't seem to figure out how to solve," said Byrne.

Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell's office sent the following statement in regard to the criminal activity:

"Mayor Harrell remains committed to a holistic approach to improving public safety and reducing crime in Seattle, recognizing issues created over the course of years cannot be solved overnight. Given SPD's significant staffing shortage, the mayor is working to hire more police officers through the [Comprehensive Recruitment and Retention Plan](#), ensuring a well-staffed and well-trained police department that is responsive to community needs. In addition to law enforcement, the City continues to advance a comprehensive approach to safety that focuses on implementing community-based solutions that include neighborhood activation, economic revitalization, and beautification efforts.

Seattle's small business owners deserve to be heard and have their concerns addressed. Input from local businesses informed the creation of the [Storefront Repair Fund](#), which provides tangible financial support to business owners to help them get back to baseline and recover following property damage. The Mayor's Office and the Office of Economic Development will continue to engage with the SODO BIA, small business owners, and community stakeholders to understand their needs and develop meaningful solutions to the issues they face."

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HEADLINE	01/23 Faulty Seattle dispatch system to blame?
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/faulty-seattle-dispatch-system-caused-death
GIST	<p>A former Seattle 911 dispatcher is blasting the city for causing the death of a resident who didn't receive timely aid because paramedics sat outside his home waiting for a police escort.</p> <p>William Yurek, 45, died of a heart attack in 2021 after his young son called 911 for help. Yurek is the victim of a city that places addresses on a danger list to firefighters and paramedics, who wait for police backup before entering.</p> <p>The system is meant to flag occupants or situations that would be hazardous for first responders, including mentally unstable people or firearm possessions.</p> <p>However, the list is inaccurate and not up to date, so as a result, Yurek died, former call center manager Brian Smith told the Seattle Times. Dispatchers can check criminal databases and not rely on the list, which is kept secret from residents, he added.</p> <p>Smith said he was harassed and demoted after he tried to fix the problem before Yurek's death. He had been with the city for 20 years before he resigned, even serving on an advisory board for King County's 911 systems from 2017 to 2021.</p> <p>"The community member died in front of his child," Smith said in a resignation letter. "This likely would not have happened had you listened to my concerns."</p> <p>Smith has filed a claim for damages because he was harassed, demoted, and suspended "in retaliation for reporting and speaking out against my manager's actions and decisions that created a public safety risk."</p>

	<p>Yurek's family filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the city this month, saying he would have likely survived if paramedics were not told to wait for entry.</p> <p>"These electronic records have a high degree of inaccuracy, are effectively hidden from public disclosure," Smith told the <i>Seattle Times</i>. He added that erroneous information exists more often with low-income residents because they move more often.</p> <p>Seattle has a total of 1,678 caution notes among 282,000 addresses in a police dispatcher system and 3,151 notes in 211,735 locations with the Fire Department.</p> <p>The Seattle Fire Department revised its policies in November, saying the notes should expire within a year unless they are renewed.</p> <p>A police spokesperson said the department was "exploring options to ensure system notes are regularly reviewed."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/24 Police took 5hrs to alert public on gunman
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/cops-took-5-hours-to-warn-dance-hall-shooter-was-on-the-run/
GIST	<p>Lost in the aftermath of the Monterey Park, California, ballroom dance hall shooting that left 11 people dead is an alarming fact: It took five hours for authorities to alert the public that the gunman was on the loose Saturday night.</p> <p>Even after the 72-year-old shooter brought a submachine gun-style weapon into another nearby dance hall about a half-hour later, a potential attack thwarted by a hero who grabbed the weapon and chased the man away, it would be hours more before police held a news conference to announce the suspect was still at large.</p> <p>Experts say the weekend mass shooting that sent fear through Los Angeles-area Asian American communities highlights the lack of national standards for notifying the public, and the need for an aggressive alert system — similar to Amber alerts — that would immediately set off alarms on cellphones in surrounding areas and post warnings on highway signs.</p> <p>"Five hours is kind of ridiculous," said Chris Grollnek, an expert on active-shooter tactics and a retired police officer and SWAT team member. "This is going to be a really good case study. Why five hours?"</p> <p>Brian Higgins, a former SWAT team commander and police chief in Bergen County, New Jersey, said an alert should have gone out right away, and a half hour between the two incidents was more than enough time to do so.</p> <p>"What took so long?" said Higgins, an adjunct professor at New York's John Jay College of Criminal Justice. "Maybe they were still doing their investigation. Maybe they didn't have a good handle on what they had. But if they didn't know, they should have erred on the side of caution and put this out."</p> <p>Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna on Monday said his department was "strategic" in its decision to release information but that he would review what happened.</p> <p>"When we started putting out public information, the priority was to get this person into custody," Luna said. "Ultimately it worked. We will go back and look at it as we always do. Nobody is as critical as ourselves as to what worked and specifically what didn't work, and evaluate that, and see what the wait was in determining what the public risk was at that time."</p> <p>A timeline of events shows police were silent for hours, not only about a shooter being on the loose but about the fact that a shooting had taken place at all, with information trickling from police scanners and</p>

sources rather than official channels. The delays came just hours after tens of thousands of revelers had been in the streets of the heavily Asian American city for a celebration of the Lunar New Year.

Authorities said the first call about the shooting at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio came in Saturday at 10:22 p.m. local time and officers responded within three minutes. Monterey Park police said it took several minutes for officers — several of whom were rookies on the force — to assess the chaotic scene and look for the gunman, who had already fled.

About 20 minutes after the first shooting, at 10:44, the gunman who would later be identified as Huu Can Tran marched into the Lai Lai Ballroom about 3 miles (4.8 kilometers) away in Alhambra. He was confronted in the lobby by 26-year-old Brandon Tsay.

Tsay, a computer coder who helps run the dance hall for his family, told The New York Times he was unaware of the previous shooting in Monterey Park when he lunged at the man and began struggling to get the weapon out of his hands. Tsay eventually commandeered the weapon, ordered him to “Go, get the hell out of here!” and watched as he drove away in a white van.

More than an hour later, at 11:53 p.m., word came that the shooter was still at large — not from an official source, but from a media outlet monitoring police chatter on a scanner. “The suspect is still on the loose according to PD on scene,” RMG News tweeted.

The Associated Press began telephoning the Monterey Park police and fire departments and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department shortly before the RMG News alert, and kept calling for nearly three hours. Monterey Park police never responded. A sheriff’s official confirmed to the AP there were nine dead shortly before 2:36 a.m. Sunday, when the AP published an alert.

At 2:49 a.m., the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Information Bureau issued a news advisory confirming the fatalities and adding the suspect was male. There was still no mention he was on the loose.

Finally, just after 3:30 a.m., five hours after the shooting, Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Capt. Andrew Meyer held a news conference to announce the death toll was 10 and for the first time publicly stating “the suspect fled the scene and remains outstanding.”

By midday Sunday, police 30 miles (48 kilometers) away in Torrance swarmed a strip mall parking lot and surrounded a white van matching the description of the one Tran was last seen driving. After approaching carefully, SWAT teams broke in at 1 p.m. and found Tran dead in the driver’s seat with a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

Police are still investigating a motive for the slayings.

Katherine Schweit, a retired FBI agent who spearheaded the agency’s active shooter program, acknowledged such mass shooting cases can be confusing and hectic and that “the first priority is always the victims and survivors.”

But, she said, “communicating with the public is equally important. In general, when law enforcement believes there is an added threat to the public or are looking for a suspect, they notify the public.”

Vibrating smartphone warnings about everything from missing children and senior citizens to impending snow squalls and flash floods have become commonplace over the past decade. More than 1,600 federal, state and local jurisdictions — including Los Angeles County — are equipped to send such cellphone alerts through the federally funded Integrated Public Alert and Warning System, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

“We have the technology,” said former FBI agent Gregory Shaffer, now head of a Dallas-based risk management and tactical training firm. “It’s just not being utilized.”

	<p>A House bill last year would have established an Active Shooter Alert Network to replace the messy patchwork of alert systems used by thousands of towns and cities that is plagued by messaging delays and low enrollment. It died in the Senate but one of its sponsors, U.S. Rep. Mike Thompson, a California Democrat, said late Monday he intends to re-introduce the legislation.</p> <p>“I think the fact that people were left in the lurch in this situation for an awful long time speaks to the need for the bill,” Thompson said. “People need to be warned.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/24 Day 335 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/24/russia-ukraine-war-at-a-glance-what-we-know-on-day-335-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German defence group Rheinmetall could deliver 139 Leopard battle tanks to Ukraine if required, a spokesperson for the company told media group RND. Germany is coming under intense pressure from Ukraine and some Nato allies, such as Poland, to allow Kyiv to be supplied with German-made Leopard 2 tanks for its defence against Russia’s invasion. • The EU’s foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, has said Germany is not blocking the export of Leopard 2 tanks. Pressure is building on Germany to supply its tanks after failing to take a decision at a keenly anticipated international defence summit at the US military base of Ramstein in south-west Germany on Friday. The re-export of tanks manufactured in Germany has to be approved by its economic ministry. • Borrell also outlined the EU’s new military aid package to Ukraine worth €500m, after the bloc’s 27 foreign ministers met in Brussels on Monday. The package was approved along with a further €45m for the EU’s military training mission for Ukraine. Hungary’s foreign minister, Péter Szijjártó, said his country would not block the EU move. • The German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock’s comment on Sunday that her country would not “stand in the way” of Poland sending Leopard tanks to Ukraine has caused some confusion in Berlin. For now, it remains unclear whether her remarks are indicative of a shift in the government’s position or merely a Green party attempt to correct chancellor Olaf Scholz’s bungled communications strategy. • Poland has reiterated that it is ready to send tanks to Ukraine without Germany’s consent. The Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, said his government would seek permission from Berlin to send its Leopard tanks to Ukraine, but described that consent as of “secondary importance”. But a German government spokesperson said Berlin had not received a request from Poland or any other country to authorise such a transfer. • The Kremlin has warned that the people of Ukraine will “pay the price” if the west decides to send tanks to support Kyiv. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the splits in Europe over whether to provide tanks to Kyiv showed there was increasing “nervousness” within the Nato alliance. Peskov also dismissed Washington’s announcement that it was planning to impose sanctions on the Russian private mercenary Wagner Group. • Russian forces continue to “endure operational deadlock and heavy casualties”, according to the UK Ministry of Defence. An MoD intelligence update also said new disciplinary measures introduced by Valery Gerasimov, Russia’s chief of the general staff and newly appointed commander in Ukraine, had been met with “sceptical feedback”, in particular in response to the decision to ban soldiers from wearing beards. • Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on Monday that changes would be announced imminently in the government, the regions and in the security forces after allegations of corruption nearly a year into Russia’s invasion. Zelenskyy did not identify in his nightly video address the officials to be replaced. “There are already personnel decisions – some today, some tomorrow – regarding officials of various levels in ministries and other central government structures, as well as in the regions and in the law enforcement system,” Zelenskyy said. • Russia’s foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, has said Moscow was willing to negotiate with Ukraine in the early months of the war but the US and other western nations advised Kyiv against it. Lavrov was speaking during his visit to South Africa, where he met with the foreign

	<p>minister, Naledi Pandor, a month before the South African military is set to host a joint military exercise with Russia and China on its east coast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russia has said it is downgrading diplomatic relations with the Nato member Estonia, accusing Tallinn of “total Russophobia”. Russia’s foreign ministry said this was in response to an Estonian move to reduce the size of the Russian embassy in Tallinn. In solidarity with Estonia, Latvia has announced it will downgrade its diplomatic ties with Russia and inform its Russian ambassador to leave the country by 24 February. • Germany has begun to move its Patriot air defence systems into Polish territory, close to the Ukrainian border, where they will be deployed to prevent stray missile strikes. Berlin’s offer to deploy three of its Patriot units in Poland came after two men were killed by a stray Ukrainian missile that struck the Polish village of Przewodow in November. • Andrey Medvedev, a former commander of Russia’s Wagner mercenary group who recently fled to Norway, has been apprehended by police, he told the Guardian on Monday. Medvedev’s Norwegian lawyer, Brynjulf Risnes, said that the police decided to apprehend Medvedev on Sunday evening after a “strong disagreement” with the former Wagner soldier over living conditions at the safe house where he had been living since he arrived in Norway. • It is “too early” to talk about a potential 2024 re-election bid for Vladimir Putin, the Kremlin has said. The Russian president “has not made any statements on the matter”, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said. In 2021, Putin signed a law that will allow him to run for the presidency twice more in his lifetime, potentially keeping him in office until 2036. • Turkey’s president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has said he will not support Sweden’s Nato membership bid after a protest in Stockholm at the weekend that included the burning of a copy of the Qur’an. Protests in the Swedish capital on Saturday have heightened tensions with Turkey at a time when Sweden needs Ankara’s backing to gain entry to the military alliance.
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HEADLINE	01/23 Ex-Wagner commander arrested in Norway
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/23/former-wagner-group-commander-who-fled-to-norway-arrested-by-police
GIST	<p>Andrey Medvedev, a former commander of Russia’s Wagner mercenary group who recently fled to Norway, has been apprehended by police, he told the Guardian on Monday.</p> <p>Medvedev’s Norwegian lawyer, Brynjulf Risnes said that the police decided to apprehend Medvedev on Sunday evening after a “strong disagreement” with the former Wagner soldier over living conditions at the safe house where he had been living since he arrived in Norway.</p> <p>“He was staying on a voluntary basis at the safe house. If he refuses to be there, they have to either let him go or detain him,” Risnes said.</p> <p>Risnes added that Medvedev was now being moved to the temporary detention centre.</p> <p>“I will try to speak to the police and we will obviously find a solution,” the lawyer said.</p> <p>Medvedev, in a brief phone call with the Guardian, confirmed he had been apprehended, and expressed worries that he would be deported to Russia.</p> <p>Earlier on Monday, Norwegian police announced Medvedev was in custody.</p> <p>“He is apprehended ... and we are considering whether to seek a court’s decision for internment,” Line Isaksen of the Norwegian police told Reuters, declining to give further details.</p> <p>Medvedev, 26, crossed the border into Norway on 13 January, where he applied for asylum.</p> <p>Before fleeing, Medvedev said that in Ukraine he had witnessed the summary killing of Wagner fighters accused by their own commanders of disobeying orders, sometimes in pairs.</p>

	<p>He said he was ready to tell everything he knew about the Wagner Group, its activities and its leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin.</p> <p>Medvedev is the first known soldier from the Wagner Group who fought in Ukraine to flee abroad.</p> <p>The US said last Friday that Wagner, which has played a central part in Russia's invasion of Ukraine, would be designated a significant "transnational criminal organization".</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Winter not over yet despite warmer January
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3789137/warmer-drier-january-weather-winter-not-over/
GIST	<p>After two periods of cold weather, snow, and even a rare ice storm to start winter, January has been relatively mild and dry. So does this mean that summer is fast approaching?</p> <p>January has been in sharp contrast to December, as it was 3 degrees cooler than average last month with a little more than 7.5 inches of rainfall – close to two inches above normal levels, according to Sea-Tac Airport reports.</p> <p>So far this month, temperatures in the Puget Sound region have been averaging about 2 degrees warmer than average, and just under three inches of rain has fallen, approximately an inch-and-a-third below average.</p> <p>But as the calendar reminds us, winter is not over yet. Weather charts for the rest of this month and heading into early February show a change to a much cooler weather pattern.</p> <p>High pressure aloft over the region has helped suppress the current set of king tides, causing little, if any, coastal flooding issues, and is expected to retreat westward by late this week. Unfortunately, that change will permit a weather system to swing southward from western Canada through Washington by this weekend, renewing chilly Fraser Canyon outflow winds and sending snow levels plunging close to the Western Washington lowlands.</p> <p>This system may result in areas of wet snow similar to what occurred Saturday and will add to the state's mountain snowpack.</p> <p>If longer-range forecast charts are correct, a more significant chance of lowland snow may unfold in early February, just in time for Groundhog Day. This winter weather pattern bears watching and reflects that winter is not over yet.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Mayor: downtown made incredible progress
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3789029/mayor-harrell-downtown-made-incredible-progress-further-go/
GIST	<p>A new year means a renewed effort to revitalize downtown Seattle, and Mayor Bruce Harrell is optimistic the city can reorient itself in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Mayor Harrell just returned from the U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter Meeting in Washington D.C., where a significant focus of the conference was on revitalizing downtown areas, and spoke to Dave Ross and Colleen O'Brien about strategies the city has to get people visiting downtown again.</p> <p>"I just believe that we have to keep it vibrant, but I think there's a balance between being just residential, and you also have to look at the city [as] an economic engine," Harrell said. "We still have to make sure that businesses have a place to thrive and that it's safe. So my first responsibility is to make sure that the area is safe, such that employees will come back and tourists will spend consumer dollars there."</p>

The downtown retail core has been having trouble since the COVID-19 pandemic. Crime has also been a concern.

According to data from the Seattle Police Department, the city recorded the lowest amount of crime in a month since June 2021, with just 3,894 crimes logged in September 2022 — the most recent month of crime data available.

While that number would only qualify as the sixth-lowest month of crime in the previous year, Seattle has witnessed a 13% drop in crime from January through October, according to [SPD statistics](#).

A part of this process is to ensure that the city helps reduce homelessness downtown, which Mayor Harrell said they have made progress alongside the King County Regional Homeless Authority, but there is still more work to be done.

“Am I satisfied? No, I’ll just be direct, I won’t be satisfied until everyone is housed,” Harrell said. “The city feels as though we’ve made incredible progress. I don’t think anyone is, quite frankly, satisfied with the progress our city or our region has in this regard.”

Earlier this year, Harrell announced [a plan](#) to hire 500 additional officers by 2027 in an attempt to stave off a “crisis-level” police staffing situation.

The city is slowly regaining visitors to the downtown core but still lacking outside major surges around events. According to the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA), the city had 2.1 million visitors in November 2022. A bright spot was Thanksgiving, when the retail core had more than 115,000 visitors, a 6% increase over the year before.

Harrell spoke to the issue of people no longer needing to visit Seattle institutions like the Pacific Place shopping center, Macy’s, the Nike store, or the Regal Meridian 16, all of which have had to close or underwent significant changes in the past two years.

“The fact of the matter is, is that in an e-commerce world, many people’s shopping habits have changed,” Harrell said. “Given that, we have to explore what will drive someone to go downtown. Is it music? Is it art? Is it entertainment? Is it a restaurant? Is it affordable daycare? Is it an educational area? So this reimagining the downtown gives us that opportunity.”

In a statement, the DSA talked about the changing landscape of downtown as retailers continue to shut their doors.

For several years, retailers have been evaluating changing needs for space and scale. We’ve seen that in urban areas since before the pandemic. We never like to see a downtown retailer choose to close and Niketown has been a great part of our retail mix through the years. We are excited about several newcomers who have opened their doors in recent months with more on the way. To help foster their success we need to ensure a safe and welcoming environment, something that’s been improving in downtown and is top of mind for our city leaders.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, the DSA estimates that around 500 street-level businesses closed and approximately 300 new businesses opened in downtown Seattle.

“I want people to be able to walk, ride or jog down a street or ride their bike and say this city is coming back to where it’s supposed to be,” Harrell concluded.

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HEADLINE	01/23 College students: food, housing insecurity
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/homeless/half-of-wa-college-students-face-food-or-housing-insecurity-survey-finds/

Around half of Washington college students have experienced some form of either food or housing insecurity, according to the results of a new survey distributed to nearly a quarter million students in the state.

Staff at Western Washington University sent the [voluntary survey](#), developed on behalf of the Washington Student Achievement Council, to students at 39 colleges and universities across Washington in September 2022.

Around 9,770 students responded, about 4% of the total number of students, with the respondents roughly representative of the demographics of the students who received the survey, though first-generation, low-income, female, white and full-time students had higher response rates.

The survey found:

- 38% of students experienced food insecurity in the last month.
- 34% of students experienced housing insecurity in the last year.
- 11% of students experienced homelessness in the last year.
- 49% of students experienced either food or housing insecurity.

To measure food insecurity, students were asked whether they could not afford to buy more food when hungry or eat balanced meals. Students were also asked whether they ate less or skipped meals due to costs.

Food insecurity was equally common among two-year and four-year college students, and housing insecurity and homelessness was slightly more common for those attending two-year colleges.

Students who experienced housing insecurity said they had a rent or mortgage increase that was difficult to pay, were unable to pay rent or a utility bill, moved in with other people because of financial problems, exceeded the capacity of a living place, left a household because of safety concerns or had moved three or more times in the last year.

Homeless students said, in the last year, they had slept on a friend or relative's couch, in a camper van, outside or in a space not meant for human habitation like a garage, car or an abandoned building, or temporarily stayed at a hotel, overnight shelter, transitional housing, group home or treatment center.

Housing insecurity and homelessness was slightly more common at two-year colleges, with around 38% and 13% of two-year college students saying they experienced housing insecurity or homelessness, respectively.

Students who identified as LGBTQ+, are a parent or caregiver, had a disability or were formerly in foster care also experienced higher rates of homelessness and food and housing insecurity than other student respondents.

The survey asked about other basic needs, including child care. Around 19% of students said they were a parent or a caregiver, and of those who needed child care, two-thirds said they could not afford to pay for it.

Students were asked whether they had trouble finding health care or mental health services due to cost, insurance or whether they could find a care provider. Around 40% of all students said they did not have adequate access to health care or mental health services.

While the vast majority of students had regular access to a computer and internet, around 18% of students in the southeast region of Washington and 20% of Black students said, in the past month, they did not have enough access to internet to complete their coursework.

	Among students eligible for need-based financial aid, 66% said they had experienced housing, food, child care, health care or technology insecurity, which is around 17 percentage points higher than the overall student population, according to the report.
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HEADLINE	01/23 King Co. taxpayers foot empty hotel bill
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-taxpayers-paying-roughly-330k-month-empty-hotel-renton/ZKZ7IE4QANDW3M2XUFJB55YBYU/
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. — Renton’s Red Lion Hotel, which once housed hundreds of people in need, now sits empty and abandoned.</p> <p>Homeless people living there during the pandemic were relocated to another shelter over a year ago, but the county’s property lease never ended.</p> <p>Turns out, King County taxpayers are still on the hook.</p> <p>According to King County Executive Dow Constantine’s office, the county continues to pay property owners a flat monthly rate of \$330,750.</p> <p>According to Constantine’s spokesperson Chase Gallagher, all utility costs are included, among them heating and electricity.</p> <p>In its heyday, the Red Lion boasted neatly made beds, plenty of event space, and even restaurants. Then during the COVID-19 pandemic, a fence went up and it became a shelter for more than two-hundred homeless people.</p> <p>In November 2020, the hotel went up in flames, and Renton Police arrested someone for arson.</p> <p>Six months after that, Renton’s mayor and Executive Constantine announced the residents would be relocated. They planned to spend \$28.6 million in taxpayer dollars on the Extended Stay Hotel five minutes down the road.</p> <p>Barb Denning works across from the South Grady Way property and contacted KIRO 7 after noticing the lights were still on.</p> <p>“They just left the power on and all the broken windows, and is the heat still on, too?” asked Denning. “My power bill was \$400 dollars a month. How much is that power bill?”</p> <p>According to Gallagher, all utilities are included in that flat monthly rate.</p> <p>“Since the facility is still being leased by the county, the Facilities Management Division has security patrols and has been installing plywood to cover windows to prevent any further damage or vandalism,” said Gallagher.</p> <p>He also says the county is currently negotiating with the property owner to fix damages and make needed repairs. The county is hoping to be out of the lease within the next month or two.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 King Co. ME out of space to store bodies
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/king-county-medical-examiners-office-is-struggling-store-bodies-amid-rise-fentanyl-overdoses/NJ3DZR2IZFGXBENGZDXEXCHFPM/
GIST	SEATTLE — The King County Medical Examiner’s Office says its morgue is running out of space to store bodies, partly due to a rise in fentanyl-related deaths, according to the Director of Public Health for Seattle and King County.

“A key indication of just how bad things are at the end of 2022, and likely to get worse in 2023 – the Medical Examiner’s office is now struggling with the issue of storing bodies because the fentanyl-related death toll continues to climb,” said Dr. Faisal Khan, the county’s public health director, during a [King County Board of Health meeting last week](#).

There’s a set amount of space in the coolers the Medical Examiner’s office uses, and the limit is being reached regularly, according to Khan.

Khan says it’s an issue seen in major metropolitan areas across the country.

“The rise in fentanyl nationally and locally over the past few years has led to a much more dangerous drug supply,” said Kahn. “Fentanyl has increased the risk of overdose and death, even from taking one pill or using a small amount of powder. It is now involved in 70% of King County overdose deaths, as of December 2022.”

Health officials are working to address the issue by increasing access to care and providing more treatment options to people with substance abuse issues in the county.

But, that work will not be able to make a significant difference without “sustained and significant funding” from the federal government, according to Khan.

Based on the information provided in last Thursday’s meeting, it is unclear what the Medical Examiner’s office plans to do if they have more bodies than there’s space for.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Lawmaker blocks update on police pursuits
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/one-washington-lawmaker-has-the-key-to-block-discussions-on-police-pursuits-she-is-wielding-that-power
GIST	<p>OLYMPIA, Wash. - The issue of police pursuits in Washington State have been front and center ever since the law changed in 2021 under House Bill 1054.</p> <p>The new legislation restricted officers from chasing most suspects. Now, they need probable cause instead of reasonable suspicion that someone committed a crime in order to pursue them.</p> <p>Since then, the law enforcement community and some mayors across Washington State have been on a full campaign to reverse the law. They say the changes have emboldened criminals, especially when it comes to those stealing cars.</p> <p>Last year, more than 45,000 cars were stolen statewide, a huge increase from previous years. Police say it's directly related to the restrictions on police pursuits. Under the new law, police say even seeing someone driving a stolen car is not enough to go after that person.</p> <p>This year, they were hoping lawmakers would come back to the table to discuss and tweak the law to a more balanced version in their eyes.</p> <p>But one person, Democratic Senator Manka Dhingra, holds the power on whether it can even come up as a discussion. However, as the chair of the Law and Justice Committee, she says she has no plans on bringing the bipartisan measure up for debate.</p> <p>Instead, she deflected to another bill that aims to create a diverse working group. Senate Bill 5533 wants a working group to talk about when police pursuits are appropriate or not.</p> <p>Washington lawmakers introduced another bill with bipartisan support that would allow police officers to pursue criminals, but the bill is not scheduled to be heard in the Senate.</p>

[Senate Bill 5533](#) does not address the crux of the issue: reasonable suspicion versus probable cause, a vital part that police are asking for.

Dhingra continued to bring up innocent lives taken due to police pursuits during her interview with FOX 13 on Monday.

Officers say they still need the discretion to go after criminals when necessary. With little accountability, officers say many who get away will go on to victimize countless other people in all different types of crime.

The bottom line: law enforcement want time in this year's legislature to talk and tweak the law on police pursuits.

Dhingra said she is not budging on bringing the issue to the floor.

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HEADLINE	01/23 FDA planning annual Covid boosters?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/23/health/covid-boosters-fda.html
GIST	<p>Americans may be offered a single dose of a Covid vaccine each fall, much as they are given flu shots, the Food and Drug Administration announced on Monday.</p> <p>To simplify the makeup and timing of the shots, the agency also is proposing to retire the original vaccines and to offer only bivalent doses for primary and booster shots, according to briefing documents published on Monday.</p> <p>The proposal took some scientists by surprise, including a few of the F.D.A.'s own advisers. They are scheduled to meet on Thursday to discuss the country's vaccine strategy, including which doses should be offered and on what schedule.</p> <p>"I'm choosing to believe that they are open to advice, and that they haven't already made up their minds as to exactly what they're going to do," Dr. Paul Offit, one of the advisers and director of the Vaccine Education Center at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, said of F.D.A. officials.</p> <p>There was little research to support the suggested plan, some advisers said.</p> <p>"I'd like to see some data on the effect of dosing interval, at least observational data," said Dr. Eric Rubin, one of the advisers and editor in chief of the New England Journal of Medicine. "And going forward, I'd like to see data collected to try to tell if we're doing the right thing."</p> <p>Still, Dr. Rubin added, "I'd definitely be in favor of something simpler, as it would make it more likely that people might take it."</p> <p>Only about 40 percent of adults aged 65 and older, and only 16 percent of those 5 and older, have received the latest Covid booster shot. Many experts, including federal officials, have said that the doses are most important for Americans at high risk of severe disease and death from Covid: older adults, immunocompromised people, pregnant women and those with multiple underlying conditions.</p> <p>In its briefing documents, the F.D.A. addressed the varying risks to people of different ages and health status.</p> <p>"Most individuals may only need to receive one dose of an approved or authorized Covid-19 vaccine to restore protective immunity for a period of time," the agency said. Very young children who may not already have been infected with the virus, as well as older adults and immunocompromised people, may need two shots, the documents said.</p>

But some scientists said there was little to suggest that Americans at low risk needed even a single annual shot. The original vaccines continue to protect young and healthy people from severe disease, and the benefit of annual boosters is unclear.

Most people are “well protected against severe Covid disease with a primary series and without yearly boosters,” said Dr. Céline Gounder, an infectious disease physician and senior fellow at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

The F.D.A. advisers said they would like to see detailed information regarding who is most vulnerable to the virus and to make decisions about future vaccination strategy based on those data.

“How old are they? What are their comorbidities? When was the last dose of vaccine they got? Did they take antiviral medicines?” Dr. Offit said. At the moment, the national strategy seems to be, ““OK, well, let’s just dose everybody all the time,”” he said. “And that’s just not a good reason.”

According to the F.D.A.’s suggested plan, officials would choose the annual vaccine’s composition each June, targeted to fight whatever variant is circulating.

But this year, the booster was quickly outpaced by newly evolved variants. It might make more sense to develop vaccines that target parts of the coronavirus other than the so-called spike protein, which changes less frequently, some researchers said.

They also criticized the agency’s proposal to use the current “bivalent” vaccine, which was designed to counter both the original Wuhan variant and the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron variants that were circulating last summer, when the agency decided on the makeup of the booster doses.

Some studies have suggested that combining both variants in the booster dose has undermined their effectiveness. Because of a biological phenomenon called imprinting, preliminary research suggests the bivalent vaccine elicits a stronger immune response to the ancestral variant than to the newer variants.

A monovalent vaccine targeted only to the newer variants might have been more powerful, experts said.

“This makes no sense, based on what we’ve learned from the current bivalent vaccine and imprinting,” Dr. Gounder said of the F.D.A.’s proposal. “Why not switch to a monovalent Omicron vaccine?”

The F.D.A. advisers said they hoped the meeting on Thursday would allow for robust discussion of those questions. But others were more skeptical.

The voting questions “are framed in such a way as to force a certain outcome,” Dr. Gounder said.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Poland pushes for tanks in Ukraine
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/23/world/russia-ukraine-news#poland-steps-in-as-pressure-grows-on-germany-to-supply-leopard-tanks
GIST	<p>Poland’s prime minister said on Monday that his government would ask Germany for permission to send German-made tanks to Ukraine but insisted that whether Berlin approved or not, Warsaw would build a coalition of nations willing to donate some of Europe’s most advanced weaponry.</p> <p>“We’ll ask for permission, but it’s a secondary issue,” the Polish prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, told reporters, according to the Polish news agency PAP.</p> <p>“Even if we ultimately don’t receive permission, then, despite that, we’d transfer our tanks to Ukraine together with others within a small coalition, even if Germany is not in the coalition,” Mr. Morawiecki added.</p>

It was unclear when Poland, whose officials have been among the loudest voices urging the provision of [Leopard 2 battle tanks](#) to Ukraine, would formally request authorization from Germany. Poland is legally required to ask Germany, the tanks' maker, for a license to re-export the tanks. The Leopards are stocked by many European countries, and Kyiv sees obtaining them as crucial to its war effort ahead of fighting that is expected to intensify this spring.

Germany has so far resisted sending its own Leopards to Ukraine but says that no other countries have formally asked for authorization to transfer their Leopards to Kyiv. On Sunday, Annalena Baerbock, Germany's foreign minister, signaled that Berlin was open to allowing allies to send the tanks to Ukraine. She told the French channel [LCI TV](#) that Germany "wouldn't stand in the way" if Poland decided to send them, though she added that Warsaw had not yet asked for such authorization.

Boris Pistorius, Germany's new defense minister who has urged patience with the country's deliberation, said in a [television interview](#) on Monday that a decision will come "soon" on whether it will send its own tanks or allow a group of other nations to re-export Leopards.

While European nations and the European Union have provided nearly 50 billion euros in aid to Ukraine so far — including €500 million announced Monday by the bloc's top diplomat, Josep Borrell Fontelles — Germany has been slower than some other European nations in sending advanced weapons.

Wary of escalating the conflict with Russia, Germany has said that it would coordinate with allies including the United States on the provision of tanks. Washington has supplied Ukraine with an increasingly powerful array of advanced weapons, but has so far declined to send its best tank, the M1 Abrams, pointing to the logistical hurdles posed by a fuel-guzzling vehicle that requires continuous maintenance.

On Sunday, the new chairman of the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee, Michael McCaul, Republican of Texas, [argued on ABC's "This Week"](#) that the United States should send at least one M1 Abrams to Ukraine to persuade Germany to greenlight the Leopards.

Ukraine's appeals for tanks and more weapons from the West have taken on greater urgency with the approach of spring, when both sides in the conflict are preparing offensives, officials have said. And Russia's recent claims to have captured the small eastern towns of [Soledar](#) and [Klishchiivka](#) — part of a broader push to seize the city of [Bakhmut](#) — have added to the pressure.

"We need tanks — not 10 or 20, but several hundred," said Andriy Yermak, chief of staff to President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.

Mr. Zelensky said that although a few dozen Western tanks might not be decisive compared with Russia's fleet of hundreds, they would help Ukrainian forces on the battlefield and lift troops' morale.

"They motivate our soldiers to fight for their own values," Mr. Zelensky said in an interview with the German TV channel ARD that was broadcast on Sunday. "Because they show that the whole world is with you."

The Kremlin spokesman, Dmitri S. Peskov, said on Monday that the pressure Germany was facing showed "nervousness" among Ukraine's allies, but he warned that Ukraine would ultimately bear the consequences if the West sends tanks.

"The main thing is that the Ukrainian people will have to pay for all these actions, for all this pseudo-support," [he said](#), according to the official news agency Tass.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Ukraine president vows to fight corruption
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/23/world/russia-ukraine-news#ukraine-corruption-zelensky-minister

President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine has vowed to take action against corruption in the wake of an official's dismissal for embezzlement, stressing that the focus on the war would not detract from tackling an endemic issue in his country.

Corruption plagued Ukraine long before Russia launched its full-scale invasion in late February. And while fighting Russian aggression has been the primary focus of Mr. Zelensky's government, corruption has remained a priority — especially as weapons and aid worth hundreds of millions of dollars flood into the country, and the price tag for reconstruction efforts is estimated to be in the billions.

Mr. Zelensky, who came to power in 2019 on [a promise of cleaning up](#) corruption, acknowledged in his overnight address Sunday that the government's "main focus is on defense, foreign policy, and war."

"But this does not mean that I do not see or hear what is being said in society at different levels," he said, citing issues with energy and military procurement, and saying his government would "take the necessary powerful steps."

Mr. Zelensky said he hoped the dismissal of a deputy minister on Sunday would send a "signal to all those whose actions or behavior violate the principle of justice."

"I want this to be clear: There will be no return to what used to be in the past," Mr. Zelensky said. On Monday, Mr. Zelensky [announced](#) in his nightly address that government officials would now be prohibited from traveling abroad for vacation or any other non-governmental purpose, and that a border-crossing procedure for officials would be developed within days.

While Mr. Zelensky did not name the dismissed official, Ukraine's infrastructure ministry identified him as Vasyl Lozynsky, a deputy minister in the office. His firing came after Ukraine's top anti-corruption agency and the anti-corruption prosecutor's office "exposed and stopped the activities of an organized criminal group involved in the embezzlement of budget funds," according to Oleksandr Kubrakov, Ukraine's infrastructure minister.

The agency, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, said that Mr. Lozynsky was part of that group and had been detained while getting a \$400,000 bribe for helping with equipment and machinery purchasing contracts. Detectives were working to identify other people involved in the organization, the N.A.B.U. [said in a statement](#).

The contracts were related to restoring critical infrastructure facilities and providing light, heat and water during the winter, the anti-corruption prosecutor's office [said in a statement](#). Over the past several months, [Russia has pummeled Ukraine](#) with strikes on infrastructure targets designed to spread misery among civilians.

Even as Russia's war on Ukraine grinds on with no end in sight, Ukraine's allies have been grappling with [complicated questions about the country's reconstruction](#): Who will pay for what, and who should control the process and the funds? What kind of external oversight of the money should be required? Kyiv has said it will need [\\$750 billion](#) to rebuild its infrastructure, though [a report in September](#) by the Washington-based German Marshall Fund estimated a price tag of \$100 billion.

The European Union has tied [Ukraine's candidate status](#) to overhauls of the rule of law, justice and anti-corruption. In addition to concerns about the risk of corruption tainting post-war reconstruction efforts, some U.S. officials have [expressed concerns](#) that American weapons given to Ukraine could be diverted or stolen for resale.

Mr. Kubrakov, the infrastructure minister, said on Sunday that he would instruct his office to review "all active projects" — including its budget and foreign funding.

"We continue to work," he said [in a Facebook post](#).

HEADLINE	01/23 Russia, Estonia diplomatic relations fray
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2023/01/23/world/russia-ukraine-news#russia-and-estonia-order-each-others-ambassadors-out-as-their-diplomatic-relationships-grow-colder
GIST	<p>The diplomatic ties between Moscow and the Baltic States frayed further on Monday as Russia and Estonia downgraded relations and each ordered the other's ambassador out of the country, and Latvia said that it, too, would downgrade relations with Russia next month, on the anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Baltic countries, which have been among Ukraine's most robust supporters in the European Union since the invasion began, have in recent days called on Western allies to send battle tanks to Kyiv.</p> <p>This month, Estonia said it would reduce the size of the Russian embassy in its capital, Tallinn, because the staff there was not interested in advancing Estonian-Russian relations. At the time, Estonia's foreign minister, Urmas Reinsalu, said his country had reduced its relations with Russia "to the absolute minimum" since the start of the war.</p> <p>On Monday, the Russian Foreign Ministry responded by ordering the Estonian ambassador to leave Russia, accusing the country of "total Russophobia."</p> <p>"The Estonian leadership has purposefully destroyed the entire range of relations with Russia," the ministry said. Estonia's ambassador, the ministry said, would have to leave Russia by Feb. 7.</p> <p>In response, Mr. Reinsalu said Russia's ambassador would have to leave his country, citing "the principle of parity in relations."</p> <p>Latvia, in a show of solidarity, said it would also downgrade diplomatic relations with Russia as of Feb. 24. Edgars Rinkevics, the Latvian foreign minister, wrote on Twitter that the downgrade was also in response to "ongoing brutal Russian aggression against Ukraine."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/24 NYPD: AirTag tracker hidden in patrol car
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/us/apple-airtag-tracking-device-found-hidden-under-marked-nypd-vehicle-hood
GIST	<p>The New York City Police Department said Monday that an Apple AirTag was discovered under the hood of a marked patrol vehicle in Queens.</p> <p>The small tracking device that connects to Apple's "Find My" network was found on the police car on Sunday in a small plastic baggie.</p> <p>In response to the discovery, NYPD Chief of Housing Martine Materasso reminded the department to be wary during their inspections of marked cars, given the anti-police attacks occurring across the country. The vehicles are supposed to be inspected before and after officers' tours.</p> <p>"Please keep a heightened state of vigilance, in light of the anti-police sentiment we have seen not only here, but across the U.S.," Materasso wrote in the email to officers, according to the New York Daily News.</p> <p>"Continue looking out for each other and be safe," Materasso continued.</p> <p>Apple announced last year that it was working with law enforcement to avoid "unwanted tracking" through the use of AirTags.</p> <p>"AirTag was designed to help people locate their personal belongings, not to track people or another person's property, and we condemn in the strongest possible terms any malicious use of our products,"</p>

	<p>Apple wrote in a statement in February. "Unwanted tracking has long been a societal problem, and we took this concern seriously in the design of AirTag."</p> <p>The company said misuses of AirTags are rare but that "each instance is one too many."</p> <p>"Every AirTag has a unique serial number, and paired AirTags are associated with an Apple ID. Apple can provide the paired account details in response to a subpoena or valid request from law enforcement," Apple wrote in their statement. "We have successfully partnered with them on cases where information we provided has been used to trace an AirTag back to the perpetrator, who was then apprehended and charged."</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Russia shadow army nears collapse?
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/russias-wagner-group-edges-into-complete-collapse-in-ukraine?ref=home
GIST	<p>Tens of thousands of fighters rounded up to fight in Ukraine for Wagner Group, the Russian private mercenary fighting corps, have gone missing or died, according to a Russian non-governmental organization.</p> <p>While Wagner Group recruited approximately 50,000 fighters in recent months, including from prisons, only 10,000 fighters remain fighting at the front for Wagner, Olga Romanova, the head of Russia Behind Bars, told My Russian Rights, according to The Moscow Times.</p> <p>"According to our data, 42-43 thousand [prisoners] were recruited by the end of December. Now they are, most likely, already over 50,000," Romanova said. "Of these, 10,000 are fighting at the front, because all the rest are either killed... or missing, or deserted, or surrendered."</p> <p>The statistic cited is just the latest indication that Wagner's fighting force is falling apart in Ukraine, even as Russia works to secure wins on the battlefield almost one year after the invasion of Ukraine.</p> <p>Wagner Group fighters have been involved in the heavy fighting in Soledar in recent weeks, a town in which Russia has claimed victory. Wagner has also been largely responsible for gains made in Bakhmut nearby, "at an extraordinary cost," given that many of the Wagner recruits had minimal training since Wagner recruited 40,000 convicts, John Kirby, a White House National Security Council coordinator, told reporters last week.</p> <p>Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hinted at the dramatic losses the Russians are sustaining in Soledar in a recent speech as well.</p> <p>"The area near Soledar is covered with corpses of the invaders," Zelensky said. "This is what madness looks like."</p> <p>The U.S. Department of Defense has also assessed that Russian forces and Wagner have both suffered a tremendous losses.</p> <p>It is "significantly over 100,000 now," Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters last week. "The Russians have suffered a tremendous amount of casualties in their military, and that includes their regular military and also their mercenaries, the Wagner Group, and other type forces that are fighting with the Russians."</p> <p>There are indications that some of these losses may be desertions. Earlier this month, one former member of Wagner Group, Andrei Medvedev, was caught fleeing in Norway, the AFP reported. Medvedev, who has been arrested, is believed to be the first member of Wagner to defect to the West, according to the BBC.</p>

Medvedev has offered to share details about his experiences in the private mercenary group to help expose war crimes for investigators, the AFP reported. He has reportedly witnessed “deserters being executed” and [“terroristic methods.”](#)

The Biden administration last week announced it is designating the Wagner Group as a “transnational criminal organization” in an attempt to interrupt Wagner’s supply and ability to do business around the globe.

“Wagner is a criminal organization that is... committing widespread atrocities and human rights abuses, and we will work relentlessly to identify, disrupt, expose, and target those who are assisting Wagner,” the National Security Council’s Kirby said.

News of Wagner’s disintegration comes as the mercenary group is experiencing trouble with the Kremlin as well. Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose military has faltered in Ukraine due to logistics and command and control failures, has been leaning on Wagner Group’s fighting power to try to make up for Russia’s armed forces’ failures in Ukraine for some time, according to a White House National Security Council assessment. But Putin and the leader of Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, have been at loggerheads in recent days, with both contradicting each other and [sniping that their fighting forces have been responsible for Soledar.](#)

Putin appears to have begun trying to shift the heft of Russia’s fighting back to the military in recent weeks. The president shook up the command of Russia’s armed forces earlier this month by promoting [Gen. Valery Gerasimov](#), in an apparent attempt to inject some momentum into Russia’s military strategy.

The recent shakeup has likely sidelined Wagner, according to the Institute for the Study of War.

“Putin’s decision to focus and rely on conventional Russian forces is marginalizing the Wagner Group and the siloviki faction that nevertheless continues to contribute to Russian war efforts in Ukraine,” the ISW stated in an [assessment](#) this week.

Gerasimov has begun his work by trying to improve the discipline of the armed forces in Russia, according to a British government intelligence assessment shared Monday.

“Since he took command, officers have been attempting to clamp down on non-regulation uniform, travel in civilian vehicles, the use of mobile phones, and non-standard haircuts,” the intelligence assessment said. “The measures have been met with skeptical feedback. However, some of the greatest derision has been reserved for attempts to improve the standard of troops’ shaving.”

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HEADLINE	01/24 Finland to join NATO without Sweden?
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/finlands-top-diplomat-hints-joining-nato-sweden-96627301
GIST	<p>STOCKHOLM -- Finland’s top diplomat appeared to suggest Tuesday that the country may have to join NATO without Sweden after Turkey’s president cast doubt on the expansion of the military alliance.</p> <p>“We still have to evaluate the situation if it turns out that Sweden’s application is stalling for a long time to come,” Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto told Finnish broadcaster YLE.</p> <p>His comment came a day after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Sweden not to expect support for its bid for NATO membership following weekend protests in Stockholm by an anti-Islam activist and pro-Kurdish groups.</p> <p>Sweden and Finland's historic bid to join the alliance needs the approval of all existing NATO members, including Turkey, which has so far blocked the expansion, saying Sweden in particular needs to crack down on exiled Kurdish militants and their sympathizers.</p>

	<p>Until now, Sweden and Finland have been committed to join the alliance together, but Haavisto's comment appeared to suggest that Finland was considering proceeding without its Nordic neighbor.</p> <p>Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billström told YLE that “we are in contact with Finland to find out what is really meant.”</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Kuwait govt. resigns amid power struggle
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/kuwaits-government-resigns-amid-struggle-assembly-96610654
GIST	<p>DUBAI, United Arab Emirates -- Kuwait's government resigned on Monday amid a power struggle with the Arab Gulf country's assembly less than four months after parliamentary elections delivered a mandate for change.</p> <p>The state-run KUNA news agency confirmed the resignation, which had earlier been reported by local media, without providing further details. It's the fifth time a Kuwaiti government has resigned in just over two years.</p> <p>The government, which is appointed by the ruling family, has been in a prolonged power struggle with the elected assembly. They had recently clashed over the assembly's advancement of populist measures that the government deems too costly, as well as requests to grill two ministers over alleged economic mismanagement, local media reported.</p> <p>Kuwait has the freest and most active assembly in the Persian Gulf, but political power is still concentrated in the hands of the ruling Al Sabah family, which appoints the prime minister and Cabinet, and can dissolve the assembly at any time.</p> <p>In September, voters sent conservative Islamist figures and two women to the assembly in the second election in less than two years. The election results were seen as a mandate for change amid a prolonged period of gridlock between the Cabinet and the 50-member assembly.</p> <p>Kuwait's Islamist opposition accuses the government of graft and mismanagement, frequently grilling ministers over their involvement in the misallocation of public funds.</p> <p>The squabbling has prevented the assembly from passing basic economic reforms, including a public debt law that would allow the government to borrow money, leading to the depletion of its general reserve fund despite its vast oil wealth.</p> <p>Kuwait, which borders Saudi Arabia and Iraq, has the world's sixth-largest known oil reserves and hosts some 13,500 American troops.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Gov. declares emergency Sudan province
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/governor-declares-emergency-sudan-province-after-4-killed-96615101
GIST	<p>CAIRO -- Armed men opened fire on a bus station in southern Sudan on Monday, officials said, killing at least four people and prompting authorities to declare a monthlong state of emergency.</p> <p>Officials in South Kordofan province said the attack in the provincial capital of Kadugli wounded at least four others.</p>

	<p>No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place as the victims were heading to areas controlled by a rebel group, known as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, local media reported.</p> <p>Mousa Gaber Mahmoud, South Kordofan's acting provincial governor, called the attack "unfortunate," pledging that local authorities "will spare no effort to regain security and stability" in the province.</p> <p>He said a state of emergency took effect Monday across the southern province on the border with South Sudan.</p> <p>The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North, led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu, controls large swaths of the province, including the Nuba mountains. It has been fighting the government in Sudan's capital of Khartoum for decades.</p> <p>A cease-fire was established between the military and the group following the removal of longtime strongman Omar al-Bashir in April 2019 amid a popular uprising against his three decades of repressive rule.</p> <p>There were tensions between the two sides after a military coup removed a transitional government in October 2021, plunging the entire country into further chaos.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 High prices, food insecurity adds to hunger
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/fao-rising-prices-food-insecurity-add-ranks-hungry-96625130
GIST	<p>BANGKOK -- Growing numbers of people in Asia lack enough to eat as food insecurity rises with higher prices and worsening poverty, according to a report released Tuesday by the Food and Agricultural Organization and other United Nations agencies.</p> <p>Nearly a half-billion people, more than eight in 10 of them in South Asia, were undernourished in 2021 and more than 1 billion faced moderate to severe food insecurity, the report said. For the world, the prevalence of food insecurity rose to more than 29% in 2021 from 21% in 2014.</p> <p>The COVID-19 pandemic was a huge setback, causing mass job losses and disruptions, and the war in Ukraine has pushed up prices for food, energy and fertilizer, putting an adequate diet out of the reach of many millions, it said.</p> <p>The report is the fifth annual stocktaking on food insecurity and hunger by U.N. agencies including the FAO, UNICEF, World Health Organization and World Food Program.</p> <p>Over those years, progress toward alleviating hunger and malnutrition has stalled and then backslid as growing numbers of people lost the wherewithal to get enough to eat. The prevalence of undernourishment as measured by the U.N. agencies was 9.1% in 2021, better than the 14.3% in 2000 but up slightly from 2020.</p> <p>Such figures show that "the slowdown in the fight against hunger continues," said the report, which also highlights the growing food insecurity faced by people who have moved into cities, where they have less easy access to affordable food.</p> <p>"Reforming our agrifood systems to produce nutritious food and ensure equitable access to healthy diets is critical," it said.</p> <p>The FAO's Food Price Index has risen in the past several years, hitting a record in March 2022. It fell back as commodity prices declined somewhat later in the year but is still 28% above the 2020 level.</p>

The Asia-Pacific region imports nearly \$2 trillion of food a year. Rising prices for basics like rice, wheat and oil hit the poor the hardest.

It's part of what the U.N. agencies call the "5F" crisis of not enough food, feed, fertilizer, fuel and financing. The conflict in Ukraine has dealt a heavy blow in many countries that depended on the region for wheat, edible oils and fertilizers.

Nearly 2 billion people — or almost 45% of people living in Asia — cannot afford healthy diets, contributing to problems with anemia and obesity as well as hunger.

Underscoring the impact of the pandemic, which hit vulnerable workers in the tourism and manufacturing industries especially hard, nearly one in 10 Thais were undernourished in 2019-2021, according to data in the report — a higher proportion than several years earlier and also than in many other Southeast Asian countries where average incomes are much lower. Poverty already had risen by 2.6% between 2015-2018, according to World Bank data.

"An increase in poverty and in undernourishment would go together," Sridhar Dharmapuri, the FAO's author for the report released Tuesday, said in explaining the situation.

Unhealthy diets and inadequate food are also compromising future health and productivity, as they cause children to suffer from stunting or wasting and make them more susceptible to illness. The report says nearly a quarter of children in the Asia-Pacific are affected by stunting, or small height for their ages.

Some other details from the report:

— In Afghanistan, 70% of people are facing moderate or severe food insecurity as the economy has collapsed after the Taliban seized power in August 2021, driving millions into poverty and hunger as foreign aid stopped almost overnight.

— In Cambodia, half of the population faces moderate or severe food insecurity.

— One-third of women in Asia aged 15-49 are affected by anemia, which causes fatigue and, in its most severe forms, can cause lung and heart damage.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Extreme group fundraising foothold in US
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/extreme-israeli-group-takes-root-us-fundraising-bid-96626974
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM -- An Israeli group raising funds for Jewish extremists convicted in some of the country's most notorious hate crimes is collecting tax-exempt donations from Americans, according to findings by The Associated Press and the Israeli investigative platform Shomrim.</p> <p>The records in the case suggest that Israel's far right is gaining a new foothold in the United States.</p> <p>The amount of money raised through a U.S. nonprofit is not known. But the AP and Shomrim have documented the money trail from New Jersey to imprisoned Israeli radicals who include Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassin and people convicted in deadly attacks on Palestinians.</p> <p>This overseas fundraising arrangement has made it easier for the Israeli group, Shlom Asiraich, to collect money from Americans, who can make their contributions through the U.S. nonprofit with a credit card and claim a tax deduction.</p> <p>Many Israeli causes, from hospitals to universities to charities, raise money through U.S.-based arms. But having the strategy adopted by a group assisting Jewish radicals raises legal and moral questions.</p>

It also comes against the backdrop of a new, far-right government in Israel led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, where ultranationalists and extremist lawmakers have gained unprecedented power.

According to Shlom Asiraich's promotional pamphlets, its beneficiaries include Yigal Amir, who assassinated Rabin in 1995; Amiram Ben-Uliel, convicted in the 2015 murder of a Palestinian baby and his parents in an arson attack; and Yosef Chaim Ben David, convicted of abducting and killing a 16-year-old Palestinian boy in Jerusalem in 2014. The group also assists an extremist ultra-Orthodox man who fatally stabbed a 16-year-old Israeli girl at Jerusalem's gay pride parade in 2015.

Shlom Asiraich, or "The Well-Being of Your Prisoners," has been raising money in Israel since at least 2018, and officially registered as a nonprofit in 2020 by a group mostly consisting of Israelis from hard-line settlements in the West Bank. At least five of the group's seven founders have themselves been questioned by Israeli authorities for crimes related to their activities against Palestinians. Some have been arrested and charged.

Recipients of its largesse have hailed the group for coming through in difficult times.

"You have no idea how much you help us," the family of Ben-Uliel, who is serving three life sentences, wrote in a hand-written letter posted to the group's Facebook page.

Being a relatively new organization, Shlom Asiraich's official filing to Israel's nonprofit registry provides little data and does not indicate how much money it has raised. But in its promotional flyers, recently broadcast by Israeli Channel 13 news, the organization indicated it has raised 150,000 shekels (about \$43,000).

Israeli nonprofits have long sought funding abroad, with the U.S. a major source. According to figures published by Noga Zivan, a consultant for nonprofits in Israel, between 2018 to 2020 Jewish-American organizations alone donated \$2 billion to Israel each year.

Israeli right-wing groups have long raised funds in the U.S. But Dvir Kariv, a former official in the department of Israel's domestic security agency Shin Bet that deals with Jewish violence, said it is unusual for extremist Jews such as the ones who run Shlom Asiraich to do so.

He said the group appears to have taken a cue from other far-right Israeli groups, particularly Kach, an anti-Arab racist group that was once banned as a terror organization in the U.S. but which Kariv said was adept at raising money there decades ago.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, a senior Cabinet minister in Israel's new far-right government, is a disciple of Kach's founder, Rabbi Meir Kahane, who was once barred from Israeli politics.

It is not clear when Shlom Asiraich began working with the New Jersey-based World of Tzedaka, a nonprofit that says it works "to enable any individual or organization to raise money for their specific cause."

Donors in the U.S. can enter the Shlom Asiraich site and click on a link that takes them to a donation page hosted by World of Tzedaka. They can also donate directly from World of Tzedaka's site.

According to an instructional video on the World of Tzedaka site, fundraisers must list a rabbi as a reference and receive approval from a Lakewood religious committee. World of Tzedaka charges \$28 a month and a 3% processing fee for transferring funds to an Israeli bank account, the site says.

World of Tzedaka supports other charitable ventures, most of them focused on assisting Jewish families in distress, according to its website.

Ellen Aprill, an expert on tax and charities at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles, said convicted criminals and their families could be considered in need and qualify as a permissible charitable purpose.

While supporting someone convicted of acts of terrorism could be seen as encouraging criminal activity, that would need to be proven, she said.

Marcus Owens, a lawyer who ran the IRS's nonprofit unit in the 1990s, took a tougher stance.

"The U.S. Department of Justice views assistance to the families of terrorists as a form of material support for terrorism," he said.

In order to become a tax-exempt group recognized by the IRS, an organization must operate exclusively for charitable, religious or educational purposes.

Repeated attempts to reach representatives of Shlom Asiraich were unsuccessful. A person who answered the group's phone number hung up on an AP reporter. Moshe Orbach, whose address in the hard-line West Bank settlement of Yitzhar is listed as the group's headquarters, declined through a lawyer to be interviewed.

A World of Tzedaka representative hung up when asked for comment.

The IRS refused to answer questions about the group, saying "federal law prohibits the IRS from commenting."

According to documents obtained by the AP, Shlom Asiraich was registered as a nonprofit with Israeli authorities by Chanamel Dorfman, an attorney and a top aide to Ben-Gvir, Israel's new national security minister.

Dorfman is also listed as the group's "lawyer/legal adviser" on Guidestar, the official nonprofit registry's site.

In a text message, Dorfman denied ever having been the group's legal adviser and did not respond to additional questions. Dorfman recently told the conservative daily Israel Hayom he was simply acting as a lawyer and that "if I knew that this is what this organization does, I wouldn't have registered it."

In October, on the eve of the Jewish New Year, Shlom Asiraich tweeted a photo of snacks it provided to Jewish suspects under house arrest, and to families of Israelis convicted or charged with crimes against Palestinians. A note accompanying the wine and other goods the nonprofit provided called the men "beloved heroes."

"Stay strong and remain loyal to the people of Israel and to the holy Torah and don't stop being happy!" the note read.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Russia FM: West prevented Ukraine talks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/lavrov-west-prevented-negotiations-end-ukraine-war-96605413
GIST	<p>PRETORIA, South Africa -- Russia was willing to negotiate with Ukraine in the early months of the war, but the United States and other Western nations advised Kyiv against holding talks, Moscow's top diplomat said Monday.</p> <p>Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks on a visit to South Africa were similar to those made last year by President Vladimir Putin. The U.S. and other Western nations have said that Russia isn't serious about hammering out a deal to end the nearly year-long war, which began on Feb. 24.</p>

"It is well known that we supported the proposal of the Ukrainian side to negotiate early in the special military operation and by the end of March, the two delegations agreed on the principle to settle this conflict," Lavrov said.

"It is well known and was published openly that our American, British, and some European colleagues told Ukraine that it is too early to deal, and the arrangement which was almost agreed was never revisited by the Kyiv regime."

Russia has repeatedly rejected Ukrainian and Western demands that it withdraw completely from Ukraine as a condition for any negotiations. U.S. President Joe Biden has indicated he would be willing to talk with Putin, if the Russian leader demonstrated that he seriously wanted to end the invasion.

Lavrov is in Pretoria for talks with South African counterpart Naledi Pandor as Russia pushes to strengthen ties with Africa's most developed country and an historical ally amid the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

South Africa was seen as the most significant of several African nations to take a neutral stance on the war and refuse to condemn Russia's invasion — to the disappointment of the U.S. and other Western partners who also view South Africa as pivotal to their plans to build relationships in Africa.

Lavrov met with Pandor in the South African capital and is expected to visit other African countries on his trip. It's the Russian minister's second visit to Africa in the space of six months as Moscow seeks to rally support.

Russia's war in Ukraine and its impact on Africa's 1.3 billion people, which includes rising oil and food prices, was expected to take center stage during Lavrov's talks with Pandor.

"We are fully alert that conflict, wherever it exists in the world, impacts negatively on all of us, and as the developing world it impacts on us particularly as the African continent," Pandor said before the talks. "This is why as South Africa we consistently articulate that we will always stand ready to support the peaceful resolution of conflicts in the continent and throughout the globe."

Lavrov repeated a claim that he's made before that the West was responsible for the surge in global food prices.

South Africa continues to keep strong bonds with Russia following the Soviet Union's support for the country's current ruling party, the African National Congress, when it was a liberation movement fighting to end the apartheid system of repression against South Africa's Black majority.

That relationship is largely what led South Africa to abstain from a U.N. vote last year condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine, although a small group of people protested against Russia and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine outside the building where Lavrov and Pandor held talks.

Despite South Africa's expressed neutrality over Ukraine, Lavrov's visit comes days after the South African armed forces announced they would hold joint drills with the Russian and Chinese navies off South Africa's eastern coast next month, bringing Russian and Chinese warships across the Indian Ocean.

On Monday, Lavrov insisted that the naval exercises would be "transparent" and follow international law.

"Three sovereign countries will hold drills without violating international law, and I don't understand with whom this can cause a mixed reaction," Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russian state news agency Tass.

Lavrov visited Ethiopia, Egypt, Uganda and the Republic of Congo on his African tour last year. That was closely followed by a visit to South Africa by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, a move seen as a bid by Washington to counter expanding Russian influence in a strategically important continent.

	<p>This time, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen will start an official visit to South Africa on Wednesday following stops in Senegal and Zambia.</p> <p>Yellin’s arrival in South Africa comes on the same day that a second U.S. Cabinet minister, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield, arrives in Ghana at the start of a three-nation African trip that will also include Mozambique and Kenya.</p> <p>Biden announced at the end of a U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit in December that he will visit sub-Saharan Africa in 2023, the first trip to the region by a U.S. leader in a decade.</p> <p>The summit and high-level U.S. visits are aimed at strengthening U.S. relations with Africa, where China has surpassed the U.S. in trade and is aiming to increase its military presence, and Russia has military ties with the authorities in Mali and Central African Republic.</p>
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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE	01/23 Int’l counter ransomware task force
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/international-counter-ransomware-task-force-kicks-off/
GIST	<p>An international counter-ransomware task force first announced at a White House event in November officially commenced operations on Monday, according to the Australian government which is the inaugural chair of the group.</p> <p>The International Counter Ransomware Task Force’s (ICRTF) operations are intended to drive collaboration among a coalition of 36 member states and the European Union to counter the spread and impact of ransomware which, despite typically being a criminal rather than state-based activity, has become a significant national security threat in recent years.</p> <p>The ICRTF was announced by members of the Counter Ransomware Initiative (CRI) after the conclusion of a two-day conference hosted by the Biden administration.</p> <p>It aims to help member states exchange information and intelligence about the threats they’re facing, alongside sharing policy and legal authority frameworks and encouraging members’ law enforcement and cyber authorities to collaborate.</p> <p>ICRTF members have committed to “joint action in the fields of resilience, disruption, and countering illicit finance,” the White House announcement said.</p> <p>“Ransomware represents a significant global threat, and Australia will continue to play a leading role working with international partners, industry and the community to develop effective responses to combat cyber criminals and protect our people and institutions,” said Australia’s home affairs and cyber minister Clare O’Neil.</p> <p>“Recent cyber incidents in Australia and around the globe are a stark reminder of the insidious nature of ransomware, and the ability of cyber criminals to cause widespread disruption and harm to broad sections of the community,” she added, referencing an attack on health insurance business Medibank.</p> <p>Following this incident, the Australian government announced a new permanent joint standing operation that would be “offensively attacking” groups behind ransomware incidents. It has not been disclosed what role, if any, offensive operations might play in the work of the ICRTF.</p> <p>The CRI conference where the ICRTF was announced was notable for the absence of several states which have been accused of failing to tackle criminal cyber activities conducted from within their territories, particularly Russia, China, Iran and North Korea.</p>

	<p>It featured five working groups which intended to take different approaches to the ransomware threat: “resilience (co-led by Lithuania and India), disruption (led by Australia), counter illicit finance (led by the UK and Singapore), public-private partnership (led by Spain), and diplomacy (led by Germany).”</p> <p>It followed a senior FBI official saying his agency had seen “no indication” Moscow has cracked down on criminal networks within its territory, and the Treasury Department imposing sanctions on a cryptocurrency exchange owned by Russian nationals that allegedly helped launder more than \$160 million for various ransomware and criminal groups.</p> <p>Ransomware attacks have rapidly become a key concern for many states following a series of devastating incidents affecting businesses that operate critical infrastructure such as the Colonial Pipeline in the United States, or contribute to essential services such as the South Staffordshire Water utilities company in Britain.</p> <p>At the time of the CRI conference, ransomware attacks were making up the majority of the British government’s “Cobra” crisis management meetings. Since then high-profile targets in the United Kingdom, including The Guardian newspaper and Royal Mail, have also confirmed being impacted by incidents.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Samsung Galaxy Store app vulnerable
SOURCE	https://thehackernews.com/2023/01/samsung-galaxy-store-app-found.html
GIST	<p>Two security flaws have been disclosed in Samsung's Galaxy Store app for Android that could be exploited by a local attacker to stealthily install arbitrary apps or direct prospective victims to fraudulent landing pages on the web.</p> <p>The issues, tracked as CVE-2023-21433 and CVE-2023-21434, were discovered by NCC Group and notified to the South Korean chaebol in November and December 2022. Samsung classified the bugs as moderate risk and released fixes in version 4.5.49.8 shipped earlier this month.</p> <p>Samsung Galaxy Store, previously known as Samsung Apps and Galaxy Apps, is a dedicated app store used for Android devices manufactured by Samsung. It was launched in September 2009.</p> <p>The first of the two vulnerabilities is CVE-2023-21433, which could enable an already installed rogue Android app on a Samsung device to install any application available on the Galaxy Store.</p> <p>Samsung described it as a case of improper access control that it said has been patched with proper permissions to prevent unauthorized access.</p> <p>It's worth noting here that the shortcoming only impacts Samsung devices that are running Android 12 and before, and does not affect those that are on the latest version (Android 13).</p> <p>The second vulnerability, CVE-2023-21434, relates to an instance of improper input validation that occurs when limiting the list of domains that could be launched as a WebView from within the app, effectively enabling a threat actor to bypass the filter and browse to a domain under their control.</p> <p>"Either tapping a malicious hyperlink in Google Chrome or a pre-installed rogue application on a Samsung device can bypass Samsung's URL filter and launch a webview to an attacker controlled domain," NCC Group researcher Ken Gannon said.</p> <p>The update comes as Samsung rolled out security updates for the month of January 2023 to remediate several flaws, some of which could be exploited to modify carrier network parameters, control BLE advertising without permission, and achieve arbitrary code execution.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 ‘No fly list’ available on open internet
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SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/us-no-fly-list-found-internet/
GIST	<p>The No Fly List and other sensitive files were discovered by Maia Arson Crimew, a Swiss security researcher and hacker, while searching for Jenkins servers on Shodan.</p> <p>A Swiss hacker by the name of Maia Arson Crimew discovered an unsecured server run by the Ohio-based airline, CommuteAir, a United Express carrier. The hacker claims they found the server while searching for Jenkins servers on Shodan, a specialized search engine used by cybersecurity researchers to locate exposed servers and misconfigured databases on the Internet.</p> <p>After a while of skimming through the files, Crimew claimed to have found a file labelled “NoFly.csv,” which turned out to be a legitimate U.S. no-fly, terrorist watch list from 2019.</p> <p>The 80-MB exposed file, first reported on by the Daily Dot, is a smaller subset of the U.S. government’s Terrorist Screening Database, maintained and used by the DOJ, FBI, and Terrorist Screening Center (TSC).</p> <p>With over 1.5 million entries, the file contains the first names, last names, and dates of birth of people with suspected or known ties to terrorist organizations.</p> <p>This should not come as a surprise, since the US (along with China) topped the 2021 list of countries that exposed the most misconfigured databases online.</p> <p>The leak of the No Fly List should not be a jaw-dropper, as in August 2021, the US government’s secret terrorist watchlist with two million records was exposed online. However, the watchlist was exposed on a misconfigured server hosted on a Bahrain IP address instead of a US one.</p> <p>As for the latest breach, CommuteAir confirmed the legitimacy of the data, stating that it was a version of the federal no-fly list from approximately four years ago. CommuteAir told the Daily Dot that the unsecured server had been used for testing purposes and was taken offline before the Daily Dot published their article.</p> <p>They have also reported the data exposure to the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). CommuteAir further confirms that the server did not expose any customer information, based on an initial investigation. However, the same cannot be said for the safety of the employees’ data.</p> <p>On the other hand, the hacker, Crimew claims in their report to have found extensive personally identifiable information (PII) about 900 of the crewmates including their full names, addresses, phone numbers, passport numbers, pilot’s license numbers and much more. User credentials to more than 40 Amazon S3 buckets and servers run by CommuteAir were also exposed, said crime.</p> <p>The list contained notable figures such as the Russian arms dealer Victor Bout who was recently freed in exchange for the WNBA star Brittney Griner. Since the list contained over 16 potential aliases for him, many other entries in the list are likely aliases of the same person and the number of individuals is far less than 1.5 million.</p> <p>Certain names on the list also belong to suspected members of the IRA, the Irish paramilitary organization. The list contained someone as young as 8 years old, based on their birth date, according to crime.</p> <p>The majority of the names, however, appeared to be of Arabic or Middle Eastern descent, along with Hispanic and Anglican-sounding names. The entire dataset is available on the official website of DDoSecrets, upon request.</p> <p>Although it is rare for this list to be leaked and is considered highly secretive, it is not labelled as a classified document due to the number of agencies and individuals that access it.</p>

	In a statement to the Daily Dot, TSA stated that it was “aware of a potential cybersecurity incident with CommuteAir, and we are investigating in coordination with our federal partners.”
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HEADLINE	01/23 Roaming Mantis malware returns
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/roaming-mantis-malware-dns-changer/
GIST	<p>Currently, the primary target of the new Roaming Mantis malware is users in South Korea, but Kaspersky cybersecurity researchers suspect its scope will be expanded soon.</p> <p>According to a report from Kaspersky Labs, the infamous Roaming Mantis attack campaign, aka Shaoye has resurfaced with a brand-new scheme. As previously reported by Hackread.com, Roaming Mantis operators use DNS changer functionality to abuse compromised public WiFi routers.</p> <p>The objective is to infect a large number of Android smartphones with Wroba.o mobile malware (also called Agent.eq, Moqhao, XLoader). The prominent target of this campaign is users in South Korea. However, Kaspersky cybersecurity researchers suspect its scope to be expanded soon.</p> <p>Threat Analysis</p> <p>Researchers explained that the Roaming Mantis attackers are delivering a revamped version of their patent mobile malware Wroba for infiltrating WiFi routers and hijacking Domain Name System/DNS.</p> <p>This malicious new attack is designed to specifically target South Korean WiFi routers manufactured by one of the leading network equipment vendors in South Korea.</p> <p>The campaign recently introduced a DNS changer functionality in its mobile malware. DNS changer is a malicious attack technique that forces a device connected to an infected WiFi router to be directed to an attacker-controlled server instead of a genuine DNS server.</p> <p>The victim is asked to download malware that steals credentials or hijacks the device on this malicious landing page. Around 508 malicious APK downloads were observed by Kaspersky in December 2022.</p> <p>How does the Attack Works?</p> <p>The new DNS changer functionality first detects the router’s IP address to check its model and compromises the targeted devices by overwriting the DNS settings. Some compromised devices leverage WiFi routers to take users to a fake landing page through DNS hijacking to redirect targets to bogus sites.</p> <p>Regardless of which method is used, the invasion allows the attackers to deploy mobile malware that carries out a range of malicious activities. Kaspersky researcher Suguru Ishimaru stated that this new functionality could manage all device communications via the infected router, like redirecting to malicious hosts and disabling security product updates.</p> <p>About Roaming Mantis</p> <p>For your information, Roaming Mantis is a financially motivated, long-running cybercrime campaign in which attackers target Android smartphones and infect them with malware to steal banking credentials and sensitive data. The campaign was first observed in April 2018 by Kaspersky when it used DNS hijacking to infect Android smartphones and hijack data.</p> <p>It used malicious APK (Android package) files to gain control of infected Android devices and steal data. However, a phishing option is available for iOS devices and PCs equipped with cryptocurrency mining features. From Asian targets, the cyber crooks running this campaign expanded their range to France and Germany in 2022.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Google Ads invites abused; push spam
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SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/google-ads-invites-being-abused-to-push-spam-adult-sites/
GIST	<p>Google Ads invites are being abused to deliver email messages promoting spam and sex websites to users who are otherwise not necessarily using Google advertising platforms.</p> <p>The Google Ads platform allows advertisers to create advertising campaigns on publisher partner's web sites and in Google search results.</p> <p>The recently seen widespread campaign involves threat actors using the Google Ads admin interface to send bulk email invitations that, coming from Google, bypass recipient spam filters.</p> <p>Careful with that invite!</p> <p>Users around the world are reporting receiving emails from authentic Google Ads accounts that are catching their attention.</p> <p>These bogus invite emails, sent from Google's servers entice users to visit spam links contained in the email message.</p> <p>"The mail is sent from official Google address 'Google Ads ads-account-noreply@google.com'" writes Redditor <i>erohtar</i>.</p> <p>"Few weeks back my boss gave me access to the company's Google Ads account, so I'm familiar with this email. It's legit, actually sent by Google, and it WILL give me access to the scammer's Google Ads account."</p> <p>Many others have reported receiving identical emails leaving them frustrated:</p> <p>"I've been trashing the emails but it would be nice if Google would get a handle on their products so their users aren't having to constantly guard against phishing scams," commented Brandon on a Google community forum thread started by another affected person.</p> <p>Websites promote adult content</p> <p>Google Ads account administrators can use the "invitations" feature to add new users to the account admin interface via email invites.</p> <p>But, it looks like clever threat actors have yet again found a way to misuse the feature for their nefarious activities.</p> <p>The URLs contained in these invite emails ultimately redirected users to dodgy websites pushing adult dating sites, with many appear to be designed to collect personal information from visitors.</p> <p>It might be tempting to report these emails as spam or phishing but that isn't the solution. Doing so may also block legitimate emails being sent from Google.</p> <p>To better understand the issue and how Google plans on remedying it, BleepingComputer emailed Google well in advance of publishing.</p> <p>"Our security teams are aware of this spam content and are working hard, as always, to stay ahead and keep our users safe," a Google spokesperson said in a statement to BleepingComputer.</p> <p>"We have strict Google Ads policies against misrepresentation and have taken appropriate action. We encourage users to report messages when they receive emails containing spam links to help us take appropriate action on accounts involved in the spam."</p> <p>Users should be on the lookout and refrain from clicking links or attachments within emails even if these emails appear to or in fact originate from authentic Google servers.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 CISA: critical ManageEngine RCE bug
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/cisa-warns-of-critical-manageengine-rce-bug-exploited-in-attacks/
GIST	<p>The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has added a remote code execution (RCE) affecting most Zoho ManageEngine products to its catalog of bugs known to be exploited in the wild.</p> <p>This security flaw is tracked as CVE-2022-47966 and was patched in several waves starting on October 27th, 2022.</p> <p>Unauthenticated threat actors can exploit it if the SAML-based single-sign-on (SSO) is or was enabled at least once before the attack to execute arbitrary code.</p> <p>Last week, Horizon3 security researchers released a technical analysis with proof-of-concept (PoC) exploit code and warned of incoming 'spray and pray' attacks.</p> <p>They found over 8,300 Internet-exposed ServiceDesk Plus and Endpoint Central instances and estimated that roughly 10% of them are also vulnerable.</p> <p>One day later, multiple cybersecurity companies warned that unpatched ManageEngine instances exposed online are now targeted with CVE-2022-47966 exploits in ongoing attacks to open reverse shells.</p> <p>Post-exploitation activity seen by Rapid7 security researchers shows that attackers are disabling real-time malware protection to backdoor compromised devices by deploying remote access tools.</p> <p>All orgs urged to prioritize patching</p> <p>All Federal Civilian Executive Branch Agencies (FCEB) agencies must patch their systems against this actively exploited bug after it was added to CISA's Known Exploited Vulnerabilities (KEV) catalog, according to a binding operational directive (BOD 22-01) issued in November 2021.</p> <p>The federal agencies have three weeks, until February 13th, to ensure that their networks are secured against ongoing exploitation attempts.</p> <p>Although BOD 22-01 only applies to U.S. FCEB agencies, the cybersecurity agency also strongly urged all organizations from private and public sectors to prioritize patching this vulnerability.</p> <p>"This type of vulnerability is a frequent attack vector for malicious cyber actors and poses a significant risk to the federal enterprise," CISA said on Monday.</p> <p>In September, CISA ordered federal agencies to patch another critical flaw (CVE-2022-35405) in several Zoho ManageEngine products that allows for unauthenticated remote code execution following successful exploitation.</p> <p>A Metasploit module (that helps gain RCE as the SYSTEM user) and proof-of-concept (PoC) exploit code targeting CVE-2022-35405 have been available online since August.</p> <p>CISA and the FBI previously warned (1, 2) that state-backed groups are exploiting ManageEngine flaws to target organizations from multiple critical infrastructure sectors, including financial services and healthcare.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Russia largest ISP: 2022 broke DDoS record
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/russia-s-largest-isp-says-2022-broke-all-ddos-attack-records/?&web_view=true

Russia's largest internet service provider Rostelecom says 2022 was a record year for Distributed denial of service attacks (DDoS) targeting organizations in the country.

DDoS attacks are cyberattacks aimed at making an internet-connected website or service unavailable by overwhelming it with many requests that deplete the server's ability to accept new connections, causing the service to become unresponsive.

Hacktivists have used DDoS attacks on both sides of the Ukraine-Russian conflict to disrupt critical services, usually as retaliation for actions or announcements made concerning the ongoing war.

In a report published today, [Rostelecom says](#) its experts recorded 21.5 million critical web attacks aimed at roughly 600 Russian organizations from various industries, including telecom, retail, financial, and the public sector.

The most powerful DDoS attack recorded by Rostelecom was 760 GB/sec, almost twice as big as the most potent attack of the previous year, while the longest DDoS lasted nearly three months.

Overloading Russia

The most attacked region in 2022 was Moscow, where the largest number of [Russia's top companies are located](#). Rostelecom says it detected over 500,000 DDoS attempts targeting the city's entities.

March marked the beginning of the attacks, while May 2022 was the culmination point of the DDoS activities. Rostelecom says the origin of these attacks based on the IP addresses was the United States, while the targets were in the banking sector.

The spike in the attacks coincides with when Sberbank, one of Russia's largest banks, [reported](#) it suffered the most significant DDoS attack it had ever seen, measured at 450 GB/sec.

Also, in May 2022, Ukraine's IT Army announced it had [disrupted](#) the distribution of alcoholic beverages in Russia after targeting an essential online portal.

The attack volume stayed relatively stable from July until December 2022 but was notably lower compared to Q2 2022. After that, however, the Russian ISP says the attacks became more sophisticated and targeted.

In December 2022, an [attack on VTB Bank](#), Russia's second-largest financial institution, forced the bank's mobile apps and main website to go offline for several days.

Cyberattacks targeting the state

About 80% of all cyberattacks targeting Russian entities were DDoS, but Rostelecom also recorded the targeting of website vulnerabilities.

These vulnerabilities included arbitrary command execution after successfully exploiting a vulnerability (10%), path traversal (4%), local file inclusion (3%), SQL injection (3%), and cross-site scripting (1%).

The largest number of cyberattacks in 2022 targeted the public sector, accounting for 30% of all recorded incidents, 12 times more than in 2021.

A notable 25% targeted financial institutes and services. Rostelecom believes the motivation for these attacks was to create a disruption in the highly-critical economical sector, as well as to access databases containing financial information and personal data of customers.

In third place, accounting for 16% of all cyberattacks, there are education institutes, which Rostelecom says might have been attacked due to their links to Russian companies.

	In March 2022, the Moscow-based meat producer Miratorg Agribusiness Holding announced it suffered a catastrophic cyberattack that also involved data encryption, causing a disruption in the distribution of food to the market.
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HEADLINE	01/23 GTA Online bug exploited, abused
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/gta-online-bug-exploited-to-ban-corrupt-players-accounts/
GIST	<p>Grand Theft Auto (GTA) Online players report losing game progress, in-game money being stolen, and being banned from game servers due to an alleged vulnerability in the game's PC version.</p> <p>GTA Online is the multiplayer spin of the popular action-adventure game series by Rockstar Games, initially released in October 2013, with new content being added to it through free title updates.</p> <p>Reportedly, a new "remote code execution" vulnerability in the PC game client was abused by the developer of the 'North' Grand Theft Auto V cheat to remotely change player's account attributes (like zero their money balance), corrupt accounts, and even ban players from the game.</p> <p>According to the user reports, the exploit can impact even players not in the same multiplayer lobby as the attackers, so anyone, as long as they're online, is susceptible to attacks.</p> <p>According to a changelog seen by BleepingComputer, the North GTA Online cheat developer added these new "features on January 20th, 2023, as part of its 2.0.0 release.</p> <p>This alleged vulnerability has received a CVE and is being tracked under CVE-2023-24059.</p> <p>The developer of the North GTA Online cheat removed these abusive features on January 21st, apologizing for the mayhem it has caused.</p> <p>"Removed badsport/corrupt account for players (bad judgement on my part for adding this public)," reads a changelog for the North cheat.</p> <p>"Removed take money from player (bad judgement on my part for adding this public)."</p> <p>Unfortunately, the reversal comes too late, as the issue has already affected many gamers.</p> <p>The Rockstar Games' support forums have been flooded by user reports claiming to have experienced account problems since the cheat's release.</p> <p>Not safe to play on a PC</p> <p>While Rockstar Games has not issued an official announcement on the situation yet, developers and those in this space claim that the exploit is a "partial remote code execution" flaw and could extend to breaching not only GTA Online accounts but also the security of the computer running the game.</p> <p>A Twitter user, Tez2, who closely follows Rockstar Games, stated that users should avoid playing the game without a firewall rule, or better, not play it at all.</p> <p>A temporary fix for corrupted accounts that seems to have worked for some players is to delete the "Rockstar Games" folder from the Windows Documents folder and then reload the game to refresh profile data.</p> <p>BleepingComputer has not tested this method, so proceed at your own risk.</p> <p>Speyedr, the developer of a custom GTA V firewall tool named 'Guardian,' has warned that attackers are on the verge of finding a complete remote code execution pathway for the newly emerged exploits.</p>

However, Speyer warned that Guardian needs to be configured correctly to protect users against the exploit and advises that Windows users not play the game until the bug is fixed.

"Just to reassure everyone--Guardian still works, and this new exploit doesn't somehow bypass Guardian," tweeted Speyedr.

HOWEVER, the chance of any user (especially beginners) setting up Guardian incorrectly in a way that doesn't protect them is too high for such a dangerous exploit."

BleepingComputer has contacted Rockstar Games to comment on these issues, but we are still waiting to hear back from the game publisher.

Until there's an official fix for the issues by Rockstar Games, it would be advisable to avoid launching the game on PC, especially if you have logged significant progress or have spent a lot of money on it.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Netflix password sharing crackdown
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/netflix-password-sharing-crackdown-march/
GIST	<p>Netflix confirmed in a shareholder letter late last week that its move to no longer allow users to share passwords for free could begin by the end of March.</p> <p>In October, Netflix announced plans to change its policy on password sharing and said it would eventually start charging people to share accounts, but at the time it did not give a specific date for when the new policy would begin.</p> <p>Even now, the company has not specified a date but did say in the letter that it would begin rolling out paid sharing more broadly "later in Q1 [quarter one]."</p> <p>Netflix is changing its policy on password sharing – and will start charging people to share accounts. Here's what we know so far. https://t.co/S5WAoGthOe — CBS News (@CBSNews) October 25, 2022</p> <p>"While our terms of use limit use of Netflix to a household, we recognize this is a change for members who share their account more broadly. So we've worked hard to build additional new features that improve the Netflix experience, including the ability for members to review which devices are using their account and to transfer a profile to a new account," the company said.</p> <p>In the letter, it detailed that account sharing, which it said is done in more than 100 million households, "undermines" its ability to invest and improve.</p> <p>The company, which described 2022 as a "tough" year, suffered its first subscriber loss in more than a decade when its customer base fell by 200,000 subscribers in the first quarter of last year.</p> <p>Despite those losses early last year, Netflix shared it ended on a "brighter finish," praising its fourth-quarter revenue, operating profit, and membership growth as it exceeded forecasts with content like Harry and Meghan that "outperformed" its expectations.</p> <p>The company noted in the letter, however, that the planned crackdown on account sharing will likely lead "near term engagement, as measured by third parties like Nielsen's The Gauge" being "negatively impacted."</p> <p>In efforts to increase growth, the company also launched a lower-priced ad-supported plan in November, stating that the move has driven "incremental membership growth."</p> <p>"We believe we have a clear path to reaccelerate our revenue growth: continuing to improve all aspects of Netflix, launching paid sharing and building our ads offering," Netflix said.</p>

HEADLINE	01/23 Spotify latest tech job cuts: 6% workforce
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/spotify-latest-tech-cut-jobs-axes-6-workforce-96608786
GIST	<p>LONDON -- Music streaming service Spotify said Monday it's cutting 6% of its global workforce, or about 600 jobs, becoming yet another tech company forced to rethink its pandemic-era expansion as the economic outlook weakens.</p> <p>CEO Daniel Ek announced the restructuring in a message to employees that was also posted online.</p> <p>As part of the revamp involving a management reshuffle, "and to bring our costs more in line, we've made the difficult but necessary decision to reduce our number of employees," Ek wrote.</p> <p>Big tech companies like Amazon, Microsoft and Google announced tens of thousands of job cuts this month as the economic boom that the industry rode during the COVID-19 pandemic waned.</p> <p>Stockholm-based Spotify had benefited from pandemic lockdowns because more people had sought out entertainment when they were stuck at home. Ek indicated that the company's business model, which had long focused on growth, had to evolve.</p> <p>The company's operating costs last year grew at double its revenue growth, a gap that would be "unsustainable long-term" in any economic climate, but even more difficult to close with "a challenging macro environment," he said.</p> <p>Spotify made "considerable effort" to rein in the costs over the past few months, "but it simply hasn't been enough," he said.</p> <p>"I hoped to sustain the strong tailwinds from the pandemic and believed that our broad global business and lower risk to the impact of a slowdown in ads would insulate us. In hindsight, I was too ambitious in investing ahead of our revenue growth," Ek said.</p> <p>He said that's why the company is cutting its global workforce by about 6%. Ek didn't give an actual number of job losses but a company spokesman said it's 600, based on 9,808 employees listed in its latest quarterly report.</p> <p>"I take full accountability for the moves that got us here today," Ek said.</p> <p>After years of heady growth, analysts say tech companies are being forced to cut jobs in preparation for an economic downturn that's likely to cut demand for their software, products and services and reduce digital ad spending.</p> <p>Just last week, Google announced it was slashing 12,000 jobs while Microsoft said it would cull 10,000 workers, bringing to at least 48,000 the number of cuts that Big Tech companies announced in January alone.</p> <p>Even with all of the recent layoffs, most tech companies are still vastly larger than they were three years ago. Spotify had 4,405 employees in 2019, before the pandemic began, according to that year's annual report.</p> <p>In morning trading, shares of Spotify added 3.5% to \$101.32.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/24 US no extradition for Palestinian terrorist?
SOURCE	https://www.algemeiner.com/2023/01/24/we-have-been-betrayed-as-billions-flow-to-jordan-us-remains-mum-on-extradition-of-palestinian-terrorist-ahlan-tamimi/
GIST	<p>The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is widely considered one of America's closest allies in the Middle East. US aid to Jordan has quietly tripled in the past 15 years, overtaking every regular US aid recipient in the world except Israel. December's Congressional omnibus spending bill gave the kingdom \$1.65 billion – \$200 million more than the two countries had agreed to in a seven-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed in September. A White House press readout from July of President Joe Biden's most recent meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah II describes the "unwavering support" the US provides Jordan.</p> <p>One item conspicuously absent was the case of Ahlam Tamimi, a Jordanian-Palestinian woman who sits at #4 on the FBI's list of most wanted terrorists for her role in the 2001 Sbarro pizzeria suicide bombing in Jerusalem. The Sbarro bombing, deliberately timed to hit the busy lunchtime crowd at the restaurant, took the lives of 15 people.</p> <p>Two of the dead were American citizens — Malki Roth and Judith Shoshana Greenbaum, a 31-year-old New Jersey native who was pregnant at the time. More than 100 people were wounded in the attack, including four other Americans.</p> <p>"It was the most traumatic experience of our lives," said Malki's father, Arnold Roth. "Very quickly it became clear that the woman who did it was Ahlam Tamimi, she drove the whole project. She was the one who scouted the site. She was the one who brought the bomb."</p> <p>Following her capture by the Israeli authorities, Tamimi was sentenced to 16 consecutive life terms in jail. She served just eight years before she was released along with more than 1,000 other convicted Palestinian terrorists in the 2011 deal between Israel and Hamas that secured the freedom of Gilad Shalit, an IDF soldier held captive in Gaza.</p> <p>Since then, Tamimi has been living free in Jordan. The kingdom refuses to extradite her to the United States, where she has been charged with a capital crime, despite a 1995 extradition treaty between the two countries. Jordan's highest court in 2017 blocked her extradition to the US, arguing that the treaty was never ratified by Jordan's parliament.</p> <p>In media appearances since her release, Tamimi has gloated about her role in the bombing and her continued escape from justice.</p> <p>"Being in Jordan has given me strength," she told Al-Jazeera in 2019. "Why are we considered to be terrorists? Why am I, Ahlam, considered to be a terrorist when I am part of a movement for freedom and national liberation?"</p> <p>A Long Campaign for Justice</p> <p>Roth and his wife Frimet continue to fight to bring his daughter's killer to justice through their blog, "This Ongoing War", and to honor her legacy through the Malki Foundation, but say that for years they have received short shrift from elected US officials and the State Department.</p> <p>"No one wants to talk to us. We're the unwanted guests of the wedding. And no one has any good answers for us in Washington," Roth said.</p> <p>Roth said that after the arrest warrant for Tamimi was unveiled at a Department of Justice briefing in Washington, DC, on March 14, 2017, his attempts to check on progress in the Tamimi case were too often met with a wall of silence.</p> <p>Years later, the situation remains largely the same.</p>

A State Department spokesperson told The Algemeiner that they are “committed to seeing the terrorist Ahlam Al Tamimi face justice in the United States,” and that they take her case “seriously” given her role in an attack that killed 15 people, including two Americans.

Publicly, Biden Administration officials have also said that the Tamimi case remains a matter of concern, and some congressional Republicans have pushed legislatively for her extradition and in letters to the Jordanian government. Rep. Greg Steube (R-FL) in April 2022 introduced legislation that would limit aid to Jordan until it honors the extradition treaty. The act did not proceed to a vote in the House.

“The US government continues to seek her extradition and the Government of Jordan’s assistance in bringing her to justice for her role in the heinous attack,” the US National Security Council said in a statement in July.

For Roth, such responses are woefully insufficient.

“What does ‘continues to seek’ mean in these circumstances?” he said. “This isn’t Saddam Hussein that you’re trying to bring to comply with your request. You have to ask yourself, why is it that on the one hand, the United States keeps saying we really, really want to bring her to justice – and at the same time, it keeps praising Jordan to the skies and keeps pumping money to the point where Jordan has now gone on top of the list? You don’t need to be obsessive to step back from that and say, ‘this is really weird.’”

Since Jordan refused to hand Tamimi over, US aid to the Kingdom continues to flow despite a provision in recent spending bills that no assistance be provided to countries refusing to honor extradition treaties for crimes that carry the death penalty or a life sentence, as Tamimi’s does.

Ben Fishman, a Senior Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, described to The Algemeiner why Congress continues to provide massive amounts of aid to Jordan.

“I would characterize [the US-Jordan strategic relationship] as strongly bipartisan,” Fishman said. “There’s a lot of sympathy for Jordan’s position and a willingness to support Jordan with both aid and strategic elements of our diplomacy to make sure that Jordan is as stable as possible. In part, because an unstable Jordan reflects an unstable region and ultimately is bad for Israel.”

Roth, however, believes that successive US administrations have lacked the willpower to force Jordan’s hand in demanding Tamimi’s extradition.

“The United States holds all of the cards in this relationship and never wants to own up to it,” he said.

While the US might be able to force a deal by withholding aid, the Washington Institute’s Fishman says the nature of the US-Jordan relationship would make that move a mistake.

“We don’t threaten aid to our friends,” he said. “It would shoot ourselves in the foot to withhold this aid, because that’s a critical part of what Jordan needs to survive for the time being and we want Jordan to survive. And dealing with one difficult case in a professional way and a legal way is far better than threatening something that ultimately isn’t in our interest anyway.”

“It’s obviously a very difficult domestic issue within Jordan,” he said. “It shouldn’t be. But it is.”

The Algemeiner reached out to the Jordanian Embassy in Washington for comment about whether the Jordanian government believes it has a valid extradition treaty with the United States and for its views on the Ahlam Tamimi case, but they did not provide a response.

Despite his uphill battle, Roth remains committed to seeing Tamimi brought to justice.

“There’s never been a political dimension in the way we see it,” he said. “It’s not about the Arab/Israel conflict, nor about Dems vs. GOP. It’s not about anything but the doing of justice. On the doing of justice,

	the fair and honest way to describe what we are experiencing is that we are being betrayed. We're pushing ahead and have no intention of surrendering — but it pains Frimet and me that we are forced to do this essentially alone.”
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HEADLINE	01/23 Gulf of Aden security review
SOURCE	https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/gulf-of-aden-security-review/gulf-of-aden-security-review-january-23-2023
GIST	<p>Yemen: <i>Qatari-owned media reports possible changes in the PLC; Houthis object to Saudi “buffer zone” proposal; Houthis accuse UK of “hindering peace efforts”; AQAP targets UAE-backed forces with IED; UAE-backed forces begin counterterrorism operation in Shabwah</i></p> <p>Somalia: <i>Al Shabaab targets Mogadishu mayor’s headquarters in latest siege; Somali forces secure a village in southwestern Somalia to use as a launching pad for future operations; Somali forces with international partner air support clear al Shabaab–controlled areas in north-central Somalia; Somali special forces withdraw from key village in north-central Somalia one day after al Shabaab suicide raid targeting their base</i></p> <p>Yemen Security Brief: Qatari-owned, London-based <i>al Araby al Jadeed</i> reported on January 20 that the Saudi-led coalition may choose to downsize the Presidential Leadership Council (PLC).^[i] The rumored downsizing would decrease the number of PLC deputies from seven to two, with one deputy representing the north and another representing the south. <i>Al Araby al Jadeed’s</i> sources reported the southern deputy would likely be...Southern Transitional Council President Aydarus al Zubaidi, while the north may be represented by either UAE-backed National Resistance Forces leader Tariq Saleh or Ma’rib Governor Sultan al Arada.</p> <p>The...Houthis objected to a Saudi-proposed “border buffer zone” as part of peace negotiations on January 21.^[ii] Houthi official media claimed the border zone would “rob Yemen of its rights and wealth.” The Houthis reported that Saudi Arabia seeks a 20km-wide buffer zone.</p> <p>The Houthis accused the United Kingdom of “hindering peace efforts” on January 21.^[iii] Houthi media criticized the British ambassador to Yemen’s support for the Yemeni government’s economic decisions. The Yemeni government’s economic decisions seek to offset a decrease in revenue caused by Houthi drone attacks on oil export facilities in Fall 2022.^[iv]</p> <p>Likely...al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) fighters detonated an improvised explosive device (IED) targeting a UAE-backed Shabwani Defense Forces convoy in al Majaza, al Rawdha district, Shabwah governorate, southern Yemen, on January 21.^[v] The IED wounded four Shabwani Defense fighters.^[vi]</p> <p>The Shabwani Defense Forces began a counterterrorism operation in Nissab district, Shabwah governorate, on January 22.^[vii] The operation aims to block AQAP fighters fleeing STC-backed counterterrorism operations in Abyan governorate, according to southern Yemeni media.</p> <p>Somalia Security Brief: Five al Shabaab gunmen and one suicide bomber disguised as Somali soldiers targeted the mayor’s headquarters in a siege in Mogadishu on January 22.^[viii] Hamar Weyne district, Mogadishu.</p> <p>Turkish-trained Haram’ad special police ended the siege after four hours and displayed the bodies of all the alleged al Shabaab militants.^[ix] Al Shabaab claimed the attack killed 34 people, while the government claimed it only killed 6.^[x]</p> <p>Somali National Army (SNA) and Jubbaland State forces peacefully secured Janay Abdalle, Afmadow district, Lower Jubba region, southwestern Somalia, on January 21.^[xi] The village is near the midpoint of the road linking the regional capital Kismayo to Afmadow. The Jubbaland Darawish spokesperson said the</p>

	<p>capture of Janay Abdalle is the beginning of an offensive against al Shabaab in Lower Jubba.[xii] The Somali forces reportedly built a base in the town for upcoming operations in Afmadow district.[xiii] Al Shabaab has controlled the town and surrounding area since 2020.</p> <p>Somali special forces, Galmudug State forces, and local militia, with international partner air support, cleared several villages in Harardhere district, Mudug region, north-central Somalia, on January 23.[xiv] The operation reportedly cleared five villages and killed at least 40 al Shabaab militants.</p> <p>US-trained Danab special forces and Turkish-trained Gorgor special forces withdrew from Gal'ad, El Dheere district, north-central Somalia, on January 21, following a large-scale al Shabaab suicide raid targeting their bases on January 20.[xv] The forces re-established new bases near the Middle Shabelle-Galgudud regional border.[xvi]</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Resurgence of terrorism in Pakistan
SOURCE	https://thediplomat.com/2023/01/resurgence-of-terrorism-in-pakistan-2/
GIST	<p>Pakistan has witnessed a renewed spate of terrorism in recent months, particularly after the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) called off its ceasefire and asked its fighters to resume countrywide attacks. Since the Afghan Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, there has been a 55 percent increase in terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Terrorism's resurgence has brought into sharp focus the fragility of Pakistan's counterterrorism gains.</p> <p>While Pakistan will have to adopt a more proactive counterterrorism policy, an analysis of factors underlying the resurgence of terrorism is important, as a comprehensive understanding of the problem will pave the way for informed policymaking.</p> <p>The foremost among the factors contributing to resurgent terrorism in Pakistan is its myopic Afghan policy of supporting the Taliban, which enabled the group to claw its way back to power. Pakistan backed the Taliban against the U.S.-supported regimes in Kabul, seeking to corner India and rein in the TTP with the former's help.</p> <p>However, the Taliban's return to power had a rejuvenating effect on the TTP. The group celebrated the Taliban's victory as its own. The TTP and the Taliban have longstanding battlefield, political, ethnic, and ideological linkages. Hence, instead of offering any help to Pakistan, the Taliban regime termed the TTP as Pakistan's internal matter. The Taliban only offered to help facilitate negotiations to reach a political settlement, provided both Pakistan and the TTP agreed to resolve their differences.</p> <p>Another reason for the resurgence of terrorism is Pakistan's engagement in talks with the TTP from a position of weakness. This served to give the militant group much-needed time and space to recuperate and spread its network in Pakistan. The first attempt to reach a peace deal was made in 2021, which ended with the TTP scrapping the one-month truce in December and resuming attacks.</p> <p>The second attempt was made in May 2022. It led to an indefinite ceasefire in June and a formal peace process between the two sides. However, peace talks soon hit a dead end as both sides did not budge from their stated positions relating to the reversal of the ex-FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) region's merger with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, among other things. The TTP wanted a reversal of the merger while Pakistan refused to accept this demand.</p> <p>At any rate, the second attempt to reach a political settlement collapsed on November 28 when the TTP called off the ceasefire and directed its fighters to resume attacks across Pakistan.</p> <p>A report by Pakistan's premier counterterrorism agency, the National Counter Terrorism Authority, has noted that peace talks contributed to the TTP's rising attacks in Pakistan. If history is anything to go by, that result was predictable: Around six peace deals with the TTP and other local militant factions in the past have failed to achieve peace and contributed to the rise of violent incidents.</p>

The abeyance of violence due to the weakening of terrorist networks in the 2015-2020 period and the [fencing](#) of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border created a misplaced notion of victory and a false sense of security. Pakistan confused the absence of violence with the restoration of peace without realizing the fragility and reversibility of its counterterrorism gains. Similarly, the fencing of Pakistan's 2,640-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan was seen as a means to minimize the blow back of insecurity and spillover of [violence](#) from Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal and the Taliban's return to power.

However, as time progressed, it has become evident that the border fencing could not stop the TTP's cross-border attacks and infiltration from Afghanistan into Pakistan.

In the context of insurgency and asymmetric warfare, inter-group mergers and [alliances](#) are key components to non-state violent actors' lethality and longevity. The more a militant group is allied, the more lethal and resilient it becomes. Since 2020, the TTP under its new chief Nur Wali Mehsud has paid close attention to reuniting various splinter factions. In the last two years, more than 22 militant factions have [merged](#) with the TTP, [enhancing](#) its operational strength and expanding its geographical outreach in Pakistan. These mergers and reunifications have also played a key role in the resurgence of militant violence in Pakistan.

Furthermore, the complacency emanating from an unfounded sense of victory against the TTP and inadequate counterterrorism infrastructure also contributed to the resurgence of militant violence. A report submitted to the parliament in December has highlighted serious capacity issues and law enforcement gaps in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD). Since the Taliban's takeover, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's police have borne the [brunt](#) of the TTP's attacks, losing more than 120 personnel in 83 assaults. Yet the [report](#) pointed out that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CTD's manpower is poorly trained, under-resourced, and ill-equipped. For instance, it spends less than 4 percent of its budget on operations, with zero allocations for procurement. Likewise, its budget of \$9.48 million or [2.18 billion Pakistani rupees](#), including salaries and allowances, is half of Punjab CTD's \$2.08 million budget.

Lately, Pakistan-Taliban relations have [deteriorated](#), resulting in frequent border flare-ups and closures. The Taliban have [accused](#) Pakistan of providing its airspace to the United States for the drone strike in Kabul that killed al-Qaida chief Ayman al-Zawahiri. At the same time, Pakistan-U.S. counterterrorism cooperation against the residual threat of transnational militancy in Afghanistan is progressively [improving](#). Recently, the U.S. [included](#) the TTP's deputy head, Qari Amjad, as well as al-Qaida in the Indian Subcontinent chief Osama Mahmood and his deputy Atif Yahya Ghorri in its designated list of global terrorists.

Going forward, an improvement in Pakistan-U.S. ties will negatively impact the already abysmal Taliban-Pakistan relations, to the detriment of Pakistan's volatile security situation.

Pakistan's [contradictions](#) in Afghanistan have come full circle. While Pakistan has been seeking strategic depth in Afghanistan against India, the Taliban-ruled Afghanistan has provided the TTP with reverse strategic depth against Pakistan.

Without revisiting Pakistan's myopic Afghan policy, a new counterterrorism campaign alone will not fix Pakistan's terrorism dilemma. Furthermore, Pakistan will have to take a long view of the terrorism challenge because terrorism is likely to persist. Irrespective of the Pakistani response, any improvement or deterioration of the terrorism threat in Pakistan will depend on the evolving situation in Afghanistan.

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HEADLINE	01/24 From a postal worker to top militant
SOURCE	https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/postal-worker-top-militant-3229336
GIST	Working as a post office worker till 2007, Mashukur Rahman started out on his path to serious crime committing robberies.

In the following years, he was arrested several times for the crime and landed in jail, which was where his life as a militant started as he came into contact with some leaders of militant group Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh.

He was radicalised there, Rab said.

After being released on bail, he became a JMB militant and later in 2017 joined the newly surfaced outfit "Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya".

Now Mashukur, who goes by the aliases Ronobir and Masud, turned out to be the chief of the military wing and shura members of the outfit.

Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, revealed Ronobir's descent into militancy during a press conference today, a day after the elite force members arrested Ronobir and another militant from a spot near Kutupalong Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar following a gunfight.

The other arrestee is Abul Bashir Mridha, who goes by the alias Alam, Rab said.

Briefing reporters at the Rab media centre, Moin said Ronobir, an expert on improvised explosive devices (IED), became the military wing chief a year ago.

Under the direction of their ameer, he organised several shura committee meetings in different parts of the country including Cumilla.

The Rab official said Ronobir along with other shura members were present at the signing of the agreement between Jama'atul Ansar and separatists in Chattogram Hill Tracts in 2021, regarding training of the military wing members.

He was involved in the disappearance of four youths from Sylhet in November 2021, he said.

"He visited the hill tracts several times and supervised training of military wing members," Moin said.

The other arrestee Bashir was an operative of Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami Bangladesh before he joined the Jama'atul Ansar in 2016 or 2017. He was in Rab's list of 50 youths who left their homes to join Hijrah in last two years.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Extremists kill 23 in DR Congo attack
SOURCE	https://thepeninsulagatar.com/article/23/01/2023/suspected-extremists-kill-23-in-east-dr-congo-attack
GIST	<p>Beni: Suspected Allied Democratic Forces fighters have killed at least 23 people in eastern DR Congo, local officials said on Monday, in the latest violence in the turbulent region claimed by the Islamic State group.</p> <p>The attack occurred overnight on Sunday in the village of Makugwe, in the Beni area of North Kivu province, said local civil society figure Roger Wangeve, who put the death toll at 24.</p> <p>"The ADF surprised 17 people in a small bar where they were drinking beer, and executed them," he said.</p> <p>A Congolese army spokesman in the region put the death toll at 24 with 10 people missing.</p> <p>Wangeve added that militants also looted and torched several homes and shops in the village and carried off several villagers into the bush.</p> <p>Provincial deputy Saidi Balikwisha, who was in Makugwe during the attack, said 23 were killed and three others are missing.</p>

	<p>He urged an increased military presence in the area to better anticipate armed attacks.</p> <p>IS, which has designated the ADF as its central African affiliate, claimed responsibility for the attack on Monday, saying on messaging app Telegram that its militants attacked Makugwe and burned down several houses.</p> <p>AFP was unable to independently confirm the death toll from the attack.</p> <p>Colonel Charles Omeonga, the Congolese military administrator of Beni territory, told AFP soldiers were "in pursuit of the enemy", who he said were hiding among the local population.</p> <p>The ADF is one of the deadliest groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a volatile region which has been plagued by militia violence for decades.</p> <p>The ADF has been accused of slaughtering thousands of Congolese civilians and carrying out bomb attacks in Uganda.</p> <p>In 2021, the United States officially linked the ADF to IS and added it to its list of foreign terrorist organisations.</p> <p>On January 15, suspected ADF operatives detonated a bomb in a church in North Kivu, killing at least 14 people and injuring another 63.</p> <p>Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi placed North Kivu and neighbouring Ituri province in a "state of siege" in 2021, replacing civilian administrators with military and police personnel in a bid to stem the violence.</p> <p>The DRC and Uganda also launched a joint offensive that year to drive the ADF out of their Congolese strongholds, but the measures have so far failed to end the group's attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 White supremacists in power grid attacks?
SOURCE	https://www.ideastream.org/2023-01-23/white-supremacists-might-be-to-blame-for-an-uptick-in-power-grid-attacks-in-the-pnw
GIST	<p>MARY LOUISE KELLY, HOST:</p> <p>In the Pacific Northwest, there were more attacks on the power grid last year than in the previous six years combined. Now, it is not clear who is behind most of the incidents or if they are indeed connected. But the FBI has been warning utilities of white supremacist plans for such attacks. That is according to an investigation by Conrad Wilson from Oregon Public Broadcasting and John Ryan from member station KUOW in Seattle.</p> <p>JOHN RYAN, BYLINE: After a series of power outages on Christmas Day on the outskirts of Tacoma, Wash., the 911 calls poured in.</p> <p>(SOUNDBITE OF ARCHIVED RECORDING)</p> <p>UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #1: 911, what are you reporting?</p> <p>UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: The power station over here off of Kapowsin Highway, and it's on fire.</p> <p>UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #1: OK.</p> <p>UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #2: Three of the transformers are burning on top.</p>

RYAN: Power substations convert high voltages into the lower voltages that keep America's lights on and appliances running. Somebody had cut their way into four substations and sabotaged the equipment inside. They knocked out power to more than 10,000 people. Tacoma Public Utility officials called for emergency help.

UNIDENTIFIED PERSON #3: The reason for the large power outage down there is we had someone break into our substation and open the circuit breakers and pry open boxes. So I was trying to get someone to respond to the substation.

RYAN: The Christmas attacks were just the latest of 15 grid attacks in the northwest since June. In most cases, the motives aren't known. By New Year's Eve, two local men had been arrested for the Christmas crimes. Prosecutors say the men didn't appear to have political motives. They aimed to knock out power so they could rob local businesses undetected.

DOUG JOHNSON: The arrests are encouraging, but we believe that the threat still exists.

RYAN: Doug Johnson is a spokesperson for the Bonneville Power Administration. The federal agency sells hydropower in the Northwest.

JOHNSON: We have not slowed down our efforts to further harden our substations and protect them in a physical manner.

CONRAD WILSON, BYLINE: In November and early December of last year, as the attacks accelerated, the FBI warned utilities of an increase in threats from racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists. That's government speak for neo-Nazis. The FBI bulletin say extremist calls to sabotage the grid were possibly to blame for the attacks in the Northwest prior to the ones on Christmas Day.

MARY MCCORD: We're in a real wave of domestic extremist violence right now that's been increasing for several years.

WILSON: Mary McCord is a former top national security official at the Department of Justice. McCord says it doesn't matter to extremist groups who actually carries out the attacks. Just the fact that the attacks are happening contributes to their goal of sowing discord.

MCCORD: White supremacists and others who are seeking to advance their own causes for ideological reasons can use that to sort of advance their purported goals of causing the chaos, undermining the government, undermining general stability.

WILSON: Neo-Nazi groups have launched several plots to take out the U.S. grid in recent years. They've even put out how-to manuals to make it easier to attack vulnerable parts of the nation's critical infrastructure. Joshua Fisher-Birch is a researcher with the Counter Extremism Project, which tracks these groups' online activities.

JOSHUA FISHER-BIRCH: The recent substation attacks have been spoken about in glowing terms by certain members of the extreme right and particularly by neo-Nazi accelerationists.

RYAN: Whoever is behind these attacks, energy experts say they're playing with fire. Ian Cope is a spokesperson for the Grays Harbor Public Utility District in Southwest Washington. His utility was targeted three times last year.

IAN COPE: You're talking about thousands of megawatts of electricity coming through these highly sensitive pieces of equipment. And it's somewhat miraculous that this hasn't led to a fatality yet.

RYAN: Federal energy officials in December launched a four-month study of ways to protect America's far-flung electrical grid from bad actors. For now, much of the system is so fragile that it doesn't take sophisticated conspiracies to do major damage. For NPR News, I'm John Ryan in Seattle.

	WILSON: And I'm Conrad Wilson in Portland. Transcript provided by NPR, Copyright NPR.
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HEADLINE	01/23 Far-right violent extremist radicalization
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/featured/perspective-far-right-violent-extremist-radicalization-among-veterans-and-active-duty-servicemembers-by-the-numbers/
GIST	<p>As demonstrated by Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh, Olympic Park bomber Eric Rudolph, and Ruby Ridge standoff leader Randy Weaver, cases of far-right violent extremist radicalization among veterans and active-duty members of the U.S. military may be few in their numbers, but they are lethal in their results. Over the past five years, the challenge of violent extremist radicalization among military members, particularly far-right violent extremist radicalization, has been brought ever more into the American psyche. Recent estimates suggest that approximately 12 to 15 percent of people charged with federal crimes related to the Capitol Hill riot on January 6, 2021, had military experience, a number which far exceeds the proportion of Americans with military experience. Even more alarmingly, a report from George Washington University's Program on Extremism's found that 37 percent of those with military experience were associated with violent extremist groups such as the Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys, making them four times more likely to be part of a such a group than rioters without military experience.</p> <p>In order to glean further insight into the phenomenon of violent extremist radicalization among American military members, the International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism [ICSVE] compiled 72 cases of active and former military members involved in white supremacist and far-right violent extremist incidents committed between 2017 and 2022. Using open-source reporting, we analyzed these cases on 17 variables. The study revealed the following key findings:</p> <p>First, Marines were disproportionately represented in violent extremist groups compared to people associated with other military branches, particularly the Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard, and were also more likely to be leaders in their groups. Former Marines who founded and/or led violent extremist groups included Vanguard America founder Dillon Hopper, Identity Evropa founder Nathan Damigo, and Wolverine Watchmen leader Joseph Morrison, among others.</p> <p>Second, a small but non-negligible minority of the sample was found to have already held violent extremist beliefs before joining the military. Clearly, the military must be able to identify potential recruits who hold these beliefs, including by conducting more thorough background checks and social media searches. Both of these steps would have revealed the violent extremist beliefs of many of the cases in this sample. Similarly, it is important to understand that adherents to far-right violent extremist ideologies and members of militia groups typically do not perceive themselves as "anti-government," and would therefore state truthfully that they did not hold any anti-American beliefs or group memberships. These types of intake questions should be amended to better assess violent extremist ideologies. Among those who joined the military with already established violent extremist beliefs were Matthew Belanger, who wrote the manifesto for the brutally violent white supremacist group Rapekrieg, and Brandon Russell, a founder and leader of Atomwaffen Division.</p> <p>Third, disciplinary actions taken by the military against active-duty servicemembers and reservists, when made public, seemed inconsistent. There appeared to be no difference between actions taken against those who posted racist statements online or were found to be members of violent extremist groups and those who made direct threats of violence. This finding reinforces the conclusions from previous reports that military personnel still struggle to understand what constitutes violent extremism, which behaviors and memberships are and are not acceptable, and what the consequences are for engaging in proscribed behavior.</p> <p>Finally, veterans and training dropouts were more likely than active-duty servicemembers and reservists to engage in violent behavior. In some respects, this finding is positive in that it suggests that those still employed by the military are either psychologically deterred or physically prevented from engaging in more violent acts. It is notable that previous ICSVE research with former violent extremists found that some violent extremists, such as members of the National Socialist Movement, tried to infiltrate the</p>

military to prepare for a coming race war but were instructed to keep a low profile until they were to be activated.

The psychological factors underlying veteran radicalization and subsequent extremist violence include the finding that very few of the individuals in the sample were commissioned officers. Rather, many held non-commissioned officer ranks, meaning that they had leadership experience while in the military but were not necessarily sought after for civilian jobs upon leaving the military, whereas as commissioned officers are often recruited for lucrative positions in private security and defense contractors. Thus, [these individuals likely experienced a drop in purpose in their lives, as well as respect received from others, after leaving the military](#). This could have made them susceptible to promises made by violent extremist recruiters to give them significance, dignity, and a noble cause for which to fight. This effect may be especially pronounced for veterans of unpopular and highly traumatic service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

This [study](#) clearly reiterates and expands upon the problem of extremist activity among active-duty and veteran military members that needs to be addressed. The [stand-down days](#) ordered in 2021 by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin appear to have resulted in better definitions of what are and are not prohibited behaviors, but the military responses to violent extremism among active-duty members remain opaque. The military must consider the cascade of effects of taking disciplinary action without psychological rehabilitation, particularly if an individual with weapons training and extremist beliefs is kicked out with no intervention and sent out into the general public with a newfound grievance against the military and the U.S. government. Additionally, the results of this study emphasize the role that Veterans Affairs and nonprofits dedicated to helping veterans transition into civilian life have to play in this prevention and intervention work.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Domestic Islamist extremism threat
SOURCE	https://www.homelandsecuritynewswire.com/dr20230123-one-year-after-colleyville-attack-domestic-islamist-extremism-continues-to-pose-threat
GIST	<p>Several incidents in 2022, including a 12-hour hostage crisis at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, with an Islamist extremist perpetrator, demonstrate the ongoing threat of Islamist extremism and are a reminder that the U.S. faces a diverse set of extremist threats.</p> <p>While the number of individuals arrested in connection to crimes motivated by Islamist extremism has declined significantly in recent years after peaking in 2015, three violent Islamist attacks in 2022 illustrate this ideology's continued ability to inspire individuals to commit violence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· January 2022 began with a hostage-taking at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, in which the attacker demanded the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani woman who worked as a courier and financier for Al Qaeda and shot at visiting FBI and Army personnel in Afghanistan. The hostage-taker was shot and killed by law enforcement.· In August, a man rushed the stage where author Salman Rushdie was speaking at an event in Chautauqua, New York, stabbing and wounding him. The 24-year-old attacker reportedly expressed support for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Shi'ite extremism and said he disliked Rushdie's criticism of Islam.· On December 31, Trevor Bickford, a 19-year-old Maine resident, allegedly injured three police officers in a machete attack near Times Square, as thousands gathered nearby to celebrate the New Year. According to officials, Bickford converted to Islam during the previous two years and fantasized about travelling overseas to support the Muslim community abroad, including joining the Taliban and fighting for persecuted Muslim communities like the Rohingya in Myanmar and the Uyghurs in China. After Bickford's family alerted law enforcement to his desire to travel overseas, Bickford changed his plans and ultimately travelled to New York City, where he allegedly decided to target police officers in his personal jihad.

These incidents – and the nine additional plots thwarted over the last three years – highlight the persistent threat posed by violent Islamist extremist movements and the need for continued attention to this threat.

Here are some statistics from the last three years that contextualize the ongoing challenge posed by Islamist extremism:

Plots and Attacks

In 2022, Islamist extremists carried out three attacks in the U.S., including the hostage-taking at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas; the stabbing of Salman Rushdie in Chautauqua, New York; and the machete attack on New York Police Department (NYPD) officers near Times Square on New Year's Eve. While four people suffered injuries, the only fatality was that of the Colleyville attacker, who was shot by police. These three attacks outnumbered the one attack reported in 2020: the June 2020 [stabbing](#) in New York City targeting police officers.

Beyond these violent attacks, several additional plots were thwarted, including at least two in 2022, three in 2021 and four in 2020. The would-be attackers planned to use a variety of weapons, including knives, firearms and explosives.

Arrests

There was a slight uptick in 2022 of individuals arrested on charges related to domestic Islamist extremism. From 2020 to 2022, 50 people were arrested on violent and nonviolent charges: 23 in 2020, 11 in 2021 and 16 in 2022. The most common charge was material support to a foreign terrorist organization, which accounted for at least 29 of the 50 arrests. In addition, at least six individuals were arrested for attempting to travel to join a foreign terrorist group or having been members of terrorist groups overseas.

Individuals were also arrested for a wide variety of crimes, including making false statements to law enforcement, making interstate threats and weapons misconduct.

Affiliations

At least 76 percent of all individuals arrested on charges related to domestic Islamist extremism between 2020 and 2022 were either associated with or expressed support for ISIS, underscoring the group's continued ability to inspire people to act in its name even though it no longer holds territory in Iraq and Syria. However, ISIS was not the only Islamist extremist group whose supporters were operating in the U.S., as supporters of Al Qaeda, al Shabaab, Hayat Tahrir al Sham, Al-Nusra Front and Hamas were also arrested in this period.

A Domestic Threat

Over the last three years, almost every individual arrested for crimes connected to domestic Islamist extremism was living in the U.S.— as native-born citizens, naturalized citizens, legal permanent residents, foreign nationals, illegal immigrants or HB-1 visa holders – at the time of their criminal activity. A notable exception was the Colleyville hostage-taker, who was a British citizen who travelled to Texas to carry out his attack.

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HEADLINE	01/24 France repatriates group from Syria camps
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/france-women-children-returned-camps-syria-96627412
GIST	<p>PARIS -- France on Tuesday repatriated another group of women and children from former Islamic State group-controlled areas of Syria, the latest return of French nationals who'd been stranded in camps there.</p> <p>The latest group was made up of 32 minors and 15 adult women, the national counterterrorism prosecutor's office said. It said the women, aged 19 to 56, were held in custody — some on the basis of arrest warrants previously issued against them. The children were placed in the care of protective services.</p> <p>France has brought home women and children from camps in northeastern Syria in successive waves since the territorial defeat of IS in 2019.</p>

	<p>Many European countries were slow to allow the return of women and children from areas where IS operated for fear they would violently turn on their homelands.</p> <p>France saw more of its citizens join IS in Syria than any other European country and has been especially wary about having them back.</p> <p>Authorities insisted on repatriating citizens and their children on a case-by-case basis, a long and cumbersome procedure that has been repeatedly criticized by human rights groups. French authorities have also insisted that adults, men and women, who fought with IS should be prosecuted in the country where they committed crimes.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Germany: 5 in plot to form terror group
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/germany-group-accused-planning-start-civil-war-96608636
GIST	<p>BERLIN -- Federal prosecutors in Germany said Monday that they have indicted five people for treason and forming a “terrorist organization” that aimed to topple the government and spark a civil war.</p> <p>Prosecutors said the suspects, four men and one woman, had made “concrete preparations” to cause a large-scale blackout in the country and use the ensuing chaos to establish an alternative government. They also allegedly planned to kidnap the country’s health minister, Karl Lauterbach, who has faced extreme vitriol from opponents of the government's pandemic restrictions.</p> <p>The group is accused of being driven by the ‘Reich Citizens’ ideology propagated by one of its members, who was identified only as Elisabeth R. due to German privacy rules.</p> <p>All five German citizens were arrested last year and remain in pre-trial detention.</p> <p>Authorities uncovered a similar plot by another, larger far-right group last month. Its members were also adherents of the Reich Citizens movement that believes the current government is illegitimate and that the German constitution of 1871 is still in force.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	01/23 Earth’s inner core reversing rotation?
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/earths-inner-core-may-be-reversing-its-rotation-study-finds-11674502308?mod=hp_lead_pos13
GIST	<p>A team of researchers from China believe the Earth’s inner core has reversed its rotation after they analyzed earthquake-driven seismic waves as they pass through the Earth.</p> <p>In a study published Monday in the journal Nature Geoscience, researchers said the reversal of the inner core rotation would shorten the length of the day by a fraction of a millisecond over the course of a year, and might have a small effect on Earth’s magnetic field, but wouldn’t affect life on the surface. The Earth’s inner core is made of iron and nickel and is separated from the rest of the solid Earth by the liquid outer core, enabling it to rotate differently than the rest of the planet.</p> <p>“In theory it has been going on for a long time but we only have observations over a few decades,” said Xiaodong Song, a seismologist at Peking University in Beijing, and a co-author of the new study.</p> <p>The spinning of the inner core is caused by the magnetic field that is generated by the liquid outer core, Dr. Song said. Understanding how the inner core rotates can help scientists figure out how the different layers of the Earth interact with each other.</p>

	<p>Dr. Song and co-author Yi Yang, also a seismologist at Peking University, analyzed seismic waves from similar earthquakes that have passed through the Earth along similar paths since the 1960s. They found that between 2009 and 2020, that rotation has stopped and might have reversed direction.</p> <p>“We have those repeating earthquakes that happen at the same location,” Dr. Yang said. “It is like we are doing a CT scan for the Earth.”</p> <p>John Vidale, a professor of earth sciences at the University of Southern California who wasn’t involved with the study, said there may be other interpretations of the seismic data.</p> <p>“The changes they noticed are valid although what’s actually happening isn’t so clear,” Dr. Vidale said. “They have a very good analysis and the theory they put in the papers is probably as good as anything at the moment, but there are several competing ideas as well.”</p> <p>Dr. Vidale says other scientists theorize that the inner core changes its rotation at shorter intervals than the 70-year cycle described by the new study’s authors. Other theories from scientists include that the inner core’s rotation actually stopped between 2001 and 2003, or that it isn’t really reversed at all, but just changed the way it rotates, Dr. Vidale said.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 FBI: missing Vancouver boy since Jun 2022
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/regional/fbi-missing-vancouver-boy-breadson-john/283-8683b2ee-9857-4035-9abf-d97735cfff0c
GIST	<p>VANCOUVER, Wash. — The Federal Bureau of Investigation is involved in the search for a boy from Vancouver, Washington who has been missing since at least June of 2022.</p> <p>The FBI Most Wanted account tweeted on Monday morning about the case of Breadson John, also known by the name "Brxsan." He would be 8 years old as of this release.</p> <p>Though the federal agency posted about John's disappearance Monday, the last known development in the case was more than seven months ago.</p> <p>On June 17, 2022, the FBI said, detectives from the Vancouver Police Department attempted to conduct a welfare check at John's home after receiving reports concerned about him from the community. The detectives were unable to locate John at the time.</p> <p>In a follow-up statement, Vancouver police said that detectives have attempted to contact members of John's family to see if he was with anyone else or remains missing.</p> <p>"To date, the family members that have been contacted have not provided investigators information related to the whereabouts of Breadson and he has not been located," the agency said.</p> <p>John was born Oct. 17, 2014 in Hawaii. He's described as being of Pacific Islander descent with black hair and brown eyes. Photos provided by the FBI are more than a year old, the agency said, so his appearance is likely to have changed.</p> <p>John speaks English and Trukese/Chuukese. He has ties to Hawaii, Arizona, Washington and the Truk/Chuuk Islands in the Federated States of Micronesia.</p> <p>The FBI released limited details about the circumstances of John's disappearance and it's unclear if he could be with an adult. However, he appears under the "Kidnappings/Missing Persons" category of the FBI's Most Wanted web page, not under "Parental Kidnappings."</p> <p>It's also unclear if there were any previous efforts to distribute information about John's disappearance to the media.</p>

	Anyone with information about the case is asked to contact their local FBI office, the nearest American Embassy or Consulate, or submit a tip online at tips.fbi.gov .
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HEADLINE	01/23 What happened to Teekah Lewis?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/local/tacoma/teekah-lewis-disappeared-24-years-ago-tacoma-bowling-alley/281-3264505e-6c91-4d21-a59b-a0c4367e09d8
GIST	<p>TACOMA, Wash. — The family of a missing toddler who disappeared 24 years ago from a Tacoma bowling alley held a candlelight vigil Monday night at the Tacoma Police Headquarters in the hopes that new information will surface.</p> <p>Teekah Lewis was 2 years old when she vanished from New Frontier Lanes bowling alley in Tacoma on Jan. 23, 1999.</p> <p>"I'm asking the community to please come forward with any information you have on Teekah, it could be the littlest thing, it could be your neighbor that looks like Teekah, you never know," said the girl's mother, Theresa Czapiewski.</p> <p>Theresa Czapiewski, has held candlelight vigils for Lewis every year since her disappearance. She said each year she holds out hope that Lewis will show up at the vigil.</p> <p>Czapiewski said it's the first time since Teekah disappeared that law enforcement officials and the Tacoma mayor came to the vigil.</p> <p>New details released in December 2022 and an updated age-progression photo showing what Lewis might look like nearly 24 years later renewed Czapiewski's hopes.</p> <p>Czapiewski said she cried when she first saw the picture earlier this fall.</p> <p>"Because after all these years they finally made a picture that looks like my daughter," Czapiewski said in December.</p> <p>Teekah's sister, Katarina Johnson, also spoke at the vigil and said she was hoping someone could bring their family some answers.</p> <p>"It's been 24 years, 24 years too long honestly," Johnson said. "Even if you think it's the smallest little thing, anything helps, any tips. We just want her home, we want closure honestly, whatever it is, good or bad, we just want that, our family deserves it. Our grandma left this earth not knowing what happened to one of her grandchildren which is the saddest thing."</p> <p>Lewis was described by her sisters as a "mature" toddler, but someone who never left her mother's side.</p> <p>In 2020, detectives said they were looking for a person of interest who was seen near Lewis that night.</p> <p>The witness described the person as a white male, about 5 feet, 11 inches, with a "husky" build, with brown, curly or wavy hair, a mustache and pockmarks on his face.</p> <p>The witness said the man was wearing blue jeans and a blue checkered, flannel shirt.</p> <p>Detectives had not previously released information about the man's clothing.</p> <p>In December, Tacoma police revealed a description of a car seen leaving the bowling alley that night, a maroon or dark-colored Pontiac Grand Am, perhaps a late 1980s or early 1990s model leaving the parking lot at a high rate of speed.</p>

	<p>Detective Julie Dier said investigators remain motivated to solve the 1999 case.</p> <p>”The fact that it was a small child, that’s always going to keep someone motivated,” Dier said.</p> <p>Dier said it’s possible Lewis is still alive and may have been too young to remember that she was abducted.</p> <p>Detectives and family members hope that someone seeing the photos of Lewis will remember something from the day of the incident or recognize one of the age-progression photos.</p> <p>“That’s one thing I will not do is give up on Teekah,” Czapiewski said in December. “Maybe she’ll look and see, ‘Wow, that girl looks like me.’”</p> <p>Anyone with information about the case can leave anonymous tips at the Tacoma Crimestoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Crash data: America's deadliest animal
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/fear-the-deer-crash-data-illuminates-americas-deadliest-animal/
GIST	<p>Behold the deer, the deadliest beast in North America.</p> <p>Deer are responsible for the deaths of about 440 of the estimated 458 Americans killed in physical confrontations with wildlife in an average year, according to Utah State University biologist Mike Conover, employing some educated guesswork in the latest edition of “Human-Wildlife Interactions.”</p> <p>Those deer-inflicted fatalities are not, so far as we know, caused by deer-on-human predation. They’re the unfortunate result of more than 2 million people a year plowing into deer with their sedans and SUVs, usually on a two-lane road, often at high speeds.</p> <p>You might wonder: Where and when am I most likely to hit a deer? And how can I avoid it?</p> <p>To shed light on this herbivorous hazard, we turned, of course, to data. Specifically, we analyzed more than 1 million animal-vehicle collisions compiled by Calumn Cunningham, Laura Prugh and their colleagues at the University of Washington for a recent paper published in Current Biology. They estimate deer were involved in more than 90 percent of the collisions, which occurred in 23 states between 1994 and 2021.</p> <p>With a few exceptions, the data show deer are at their most dangerous in November. Indeed, the deer threat peaks just before Thanksgiving — typically Nov. 7 through 14 — when you’re about three times more likely to hit a deer than at any other time of year.</p> <p>Experienced deer hunters can probably guess why driving in November can turn into Russian roulette on certain highways and byways: In much of the country, that’s rutting season. And during the rut, deer focus on procreation, not self-preservation. Marianne Gauldin of the Alabama Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries Division compares rutting bucks to teenage boys.</p> <p>“They are hyper-focused on the opportunity to breed, and they therefore lose some of their wits,” Gauldin said. “They are full-tilt looking for does, chasing does and running after does for the opportunity to breed. And they are doing this with tunnel vision ... literally running across the road.”</p> <p>Does share similar distractions. They’re either in estrus — hormonally receptive to sex and looking to breed — or fleeing hot-and-bothered bucks until their cycles catch up.</p>

Collisions occur more often in states with the most white-tailed deer — which experts say tend to have a shorter, sharper rut than the western mule deer — and in states with long stretches of busy rural roads. Separate insurance claim data from State Farm, which is widely cited in academic research, shows a driver out minding her own business on the winding, bending roads of West Virginia had a 1 in 35 chance of hitting an animal between June 2021 and June 2022, making the Mountain State easily the most dangerous in terms of deer-car collisions. Montana and Michigan were next. D.C. drivers, by contrast, had only a 1 in 907 chance of stopping a buck while driving down Pennsylvania Avenue, or anywhere else.

Deer are responsible for at least 69 percent of animal-related accident claims, according to State Farm. Another 12 percent of claims involve unidentified animals, many of which could be deer that bounded off before the driver got a good look at them or were mangled beyond recognition in the crash.

The third-most-dangerous animals on the road are undifferentiated rodents, which are cited in 5 percent of all animal-related accident claims. However, State Farm spokesperson Dave Phillips noted that many of the drivers never make contact with said rodent: The vast majority of those accidents occur when motorists swerve to avoid a suicidal squirrel or moseying marmot.

Our more calendar-conscious readers will note that peak deer-crash season coincides with another big moment in November: the first week of daylight saving time, which begins the first Sunday of the month. And the University of Washington team has found that the two events are not unrelated.

To understand why, we need to spelunk deeper into their data, which breaks new ground by including the exact location, date and hour of all these deer disasters. When we glance at a chart of accidents that includes time of day and time of year, one fact strikes us right between the headlights: Evening, the twilight of each day — especially in November! — is the hour of the Götterdeemmerung.

Conveniently for us, the University of Washington scholars used accident coordinates and some basic weather math to calculate exactly when the sun would have risen or set at each location. It turns out that deer danger skyrockets about 30 minutes after sunset and remains extraordinarily elevated for almost half an hour.

Those with deer-behavior expertise say drivers should be on high alert as darkness falls in autumn — especially when careening through the deer's favorite transitional habitats, the forest-edge ecosystem created by roads and other developments. But they urge us to take a lesson from the thousands of people who land in hospitals and body shops each year after attempting to avoid a turtle or chipmunk: If you do see a deer, don't swerve.

"Slow down as much as you can, obviously, coming up to it," said Karlin Gill of the National Deer Association, a hunting and conservation organization. "But if it's unavoidable and you're going to hit the deer, don't try and swerve out of the way. That can cause an even worse car wreck, and you still might hit the deer regardless."

Deer crashes also rise in the morning, about 30 minutes before sunrise, but the number is significantly lower than after sunset. To understand why, we need to dig deeper into both deer and human activity patterns.

Biologist after biologist told us deer are crepuscular, meaning they're most active at dawn and dusk. When Texas A&M University wildlife scientist Stephen Webb and his colleagues fitted GPS trackers onto white-tailed deer in Oklahoma, they found deer movement peaks at both sunrise and sunset.

"Deer, unlike humans, don't lay down for eight hours at night and then get up and move throughout the day," said Gill, who, as a hunter, closely examines deer behavior. "They actually go through a cycle where they'll lay down, bed, get up, eat, lay down, bed, get up, eat, and they'll do this throughout a 24-hour period."

But if deer are equally active at dawn and dusk, why are they so much more likely to be hit in the evening? To untangle that one, we need to examine another somewhat crepuscular species: the American commuter. Our commutes also peak in the morning and evening, but we're much more likely to be driving at dusk than we are at dawn, and we stay on the roads even as darkness falls and the deer start moving — often squarely into our headlights.

It's a matter of visibility. Deer are just as active two hours before dusk as they are two hours after, yet we're about 14 times more likely to hit a deer after sundown than we are before.

And, as Cunningham notes, right at the peak of the whitetail rut, we throw another variable into the stew: We end daylight saving time. Suddenly, as far as the deer are concerned, our 6 p.m. commute happens an hour later. Millions of drivers find themselves contending with lower visibility just as sex hormones flood the local deer population.

"It's like one of the grandest-scale natural experiments that we can come up with, where humans impose these very arbitrary and abrupt changes on the wildlife," Cunningham told us from his native Tasmania (he's at the University of Washington as a Fulbright fellow).

People living on the far eastern side of a time zone are about 1.35 times as likely to hit a deer as folks on the far western edge, since folks in the east are more likely to be driving home in the dark. Similarly, folks in Northern states, where days are short and darkness rules the winter, are 1.86 times more likely to hit a deer than their friends in America's sunny South.

Taking these effects into account, the University of Washington team estimates that "falling back" causes a 16 percent jump in deer carnage in the weeks after the shift. It's possible that adopting permanent daylight saving time would thus save the lives of more than 36,000 deer and 33 humans each year.

On the down side, chronobiologist Eva Winnebeck of the University of Surrey [argues](#) that any gains might be offset by an increase in deaths spurred by the chronic drowsiness that would inevitably set in if our solar-powered circadian rhythms were forced to endure a [never-ending disconnect](#) between the sun and clocks set permanently to daylight saving time.

Here at the Department of Data, we've found a [strong connection between happiness and the great outdoors](#). So we're partial to any move that would give us more daylight hours to get out after work and fish, run or dominate the competitive wood-chopping circuit, circadian rhythms be darned.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Tipping getting out of control?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/is-tipping-getting-out-of-control-many-consumers-say-yes/
GIST	<p>NEW YORK (AP) — Across the country, there's a silent frustration brewing about an age-old practice that many say is getting out of hand: tipping.</p> <p>Some fed-up consumers are posting rants on social media complaining about tip requests at drive-thrus, while others say they're tired of being asked to leave a gratuity for a muffin or a simple cup of coffee at their neighborhood bakery. What's next, they wonder — are we going to be tipping our doctors and dentists, too?</p> <p>As more businesses adopt digital payment methods, customers are automatically being prompted to leave a gratuity — many times as high as 30% — at places they normally wouldn't. And some say it has become more frustrating as the price of items has skyrocketed due to inflation, which eased to 6.5% in December but still remains painfully high.</p> <p>"Suddenly, these screens are at every establishment we encounter. They're popping up online as well for online orders. And I fear that there is no end," said etiquette expert Thomas Farley, who considers the whole thing somewhat of "an invasion."</p>

Unlike tip jars that shoppers can easily ignore if they don't have spare change, experts say the digital requests can produce social pressure and are more difficult to bypass. And your generosity, or lack thereof, can be laid bare for anyone close enough to glance at the screen — including the workers themselves.

Dylan Schenker is one of them. The 38-year-old earns about \$400 a month in tips, which provides a helpful supplement to his \$15 hourly wage as a barista at Philadelphia café located inside a restaurant. Most of those tips come from consumers who order coffee drinks or interact with the café for other things, such as carryout orders. The gratuity helps cover his monthly rent and eases some of his burdens while he attends graduate school and juggles his job.

Schenker says it's hard to sympathize with consumers who are able to afford pricey coffee drinks but complain about tipping. And he often feels demoralized when people don't leave behind anything extra — especially if they're regulars.

"Tipping is about making sure the people who are performing that service for you are getting paid what they're owed," said Schenker, who's been working in the service industry for roughly 18 years.

Traditionally, consumers have taken pride in being good tippers at places like restaurants, which typically pay their workers lower than the minimum wage in expectation they'll make up the difference in tips. But academics who study the topic say many consumers are now feeling irritated by automatic tip requests at coffee shops and other counter service eateries where tipping has not typically been expected, workers make at least the minimum wage and service is usually limited.

"People do not like unsolicited advice," said Ismail Karabas, a marketing professor at Murray State University who studies tipping. "They don't like to be asked for things, especially at the wrong time."

Some of the requests can also come from odd places. Clarissa Moore, a 35-year-old who works as a supervisor at a utility company in Pennsylvania, said even her mortgage company has been asking for tips lately. Typically, she's happy to leave a gratuity at restaurants, and sometimes at coffee shops and other fast-food places when the service is good. But, Moore said she believes consumers shouldn't be asked to tip nearly everywhere they go — and it shouldn't be something that's expected of them.

"It makes you feel bad. You feel like you have to do it because they're asking you to do it," she said. "But then you have to think about the position that puts people in. They're paying for something that they really don't want to pay for, or they're tipping when they really don't want to tip — or can't afford to tip — because they don't want to feel bad."

In the book "Emily Post's Etiquette," authors Lizzie Post and Daniel Post Senning advise consumers to tip on ride-shares, like Uber and Lyft, as well as food and beverages, including alcohol. But they also write that it's up to each person to choose how much to tip at a café or a take-out food service, and that consumers shouldn't feel embarrassed about choosing the lowest suggested tip amount, and don't have to explain themselves if they don't tip.

Digital payment methods have been around for a number of years, though experts say the pandemic has accelerated the trend towards more tipping. Michael Lynn, a consumer behavior professor at Cornell University, said consumers were more generous with tips during the early days of the pandemic in an effort to show support for restaurants and other businesses that were hard hit by COVID-19. Many people genuinely wanted to help out and felt sympathetic to workers who held jobs that put them more at risk of catching the virus, Lynn said.

Tips at full-service restaurants grew by 25.3% in the third quarter of 2022, while gratuities at quick or counter service restaurants went up 16.7% compared to the same time in 2021, according to Square, one of the biggest companies operating digital payment methods. Data provided by the company shows continuous growth for the same period since 2019.

As tip requests have become more common, some businesses are advertising it in their job postings to lure in more workers even though the extra money isn't always guaranteed.

In December, Starbucks rolled out a new tipping option on credit and debit card transactions at its stores, something a group organizing the company's hourly workers had called for. Since then, a Starbucks spokesperson said nearly half of credit and debit card transactions have included a gratuity, which — along with tips received through cash and the Starbucks app — are distributed based on the number of hours a barista worked on the days the tips were received.

Karabas, the Murray State professor, says some customers, like those who've worked in the service industry in the past, want to tip workers at quick service businesses and wouldn't be irritated by the automatic requests. But for others, research shows they might be less likely to come back to a particular business if they are feeling irritated by the requests, he said.

The final tab might also impact how customers react. Karabas said in the research he did with other academics, they manipulated the payment amounts and found that when the check was high, consumers no longer felt as irritated by the tip requests. That suggests the best time for a coffee shop to ask for that 20% tip, for example, might be on four or five orders of coffee, not a small cup that costs \$4.

Some consumers might continue to shrug off the tip requests regardless of the amount.

"If you work for a company, it's that company's job to pay you for doing work for them," said Mike Janavey, a footwear and clothing designer who lives in New York City. "They're not supposed to be juicing consumers that are already spending money there to pay their employees."

Schenker, the Philadelphia barista, agrees — to a certain extent.

"The onus should absolutely be on the owners, but that doesn't change overnight," he said. "And this is the best thing we have right now."

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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	01/23 Chicago shooting: 2 killed, 3 injured
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/2-killed-3-critically-injured-in-chicago-apartment-shooting/
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (AP) — Two people died and three others were critically injured in a home invasion shooting in a Chicago apartment Monday afternoon, authorities said.</p> <p>The shooting occurred about 1:45 p.m. in the South Shore neighborhood, Chicago police and fire officials said.</p> <p>Multiple suspects fled from the scene and were not in custody, police said.</p> <p>Deputy Police Chief Sean Loughran described the incident as a "targeted home invasion."</p> <p>"It does not appear to be a random act," Loughran said during a news briefing.</p> <p>Besides the two persons killed and pronounced dead at the scene, three were taken "initially in critical condition" to University of Chicago Hospital, Loughran said.</p> <p>One of the victims went to a business about half a mile (0.8 kilometers) away for help, he said.</p>

	The ages and genders of the victims were not immediately available, but apparently no children were involved, Loughran said.
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HEADLINE	01/23 US Marshals Service: arrests, seizures 2022
SOURCE	https://www.hstoday.us/subject-matter-areas/law-enforcement-and-public-safety/u-s-marshals-arrested-more-than-75000-fugitives-in-2022/
GIST	<p>The U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) arrested 75,846 fugitives (28,324 on federal and 47,522 on state and local warrants) in Fiscal Year 2022. On average, the agency arrested 303 fugitives per day (based on 250 operational days).</p> <p>That number breaks down as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex offenders – 9,911 (Sex offenses include sexual assault, failure to register/noncompliance with the national sex offender registry and other offenses.) • Gang members – 5,189 • Homicide suspects – 5,759 • International/foreign fugitives – 1,496 (A foreign fugitive is wanted by a foreign nation and believed to be in the United States.) • Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Program fugitives – 986 (OCDETF cases combine the resources and expertise of numerous federal agencies to target drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.) • Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act violations – 248 (AWA categorizes sex offenders into a three-tiered system based on the crime committed and requires offenders to maintain their registration information accordingly. For example, Tier 3 offenders – the most serious – must update their whereabouts every three months with lifetime registration requirements.) • “15 Most Wanted” fugitives – 2 <p>Additionally, the USMS seized more than 6,200 firearms during numerous violence reduction and counter gang operations in FY22.</p> <p>In July 2022, USMS conducted a fugitive apprehension initiative aimed at combating violent crime in 10 cities with a significant number of homicides and shootings. Using its broad arrest authority and network of partners, USMS focused on the most dangerous criminals causing the most harm in those cities. This 30-day initiative, called Operation North Star, resulted in the arrest of 1,501 individuals, including 230 wanted for homicide and 131 for sexual assault, in Baltimore, Chicago, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, Memphis, New Orleans, New York City, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. These efforts have contributed to the notable violence reduction accomplishments of our local law enforcement partners and communities in the 10 cities.</p> <p>“Across the country, neighborhoods are safer because the U.S. Marshals Service apprehended 300 dangerous fugitives nearly every day in 2022,” said Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco. “Together with our state and local law enforcement partners, U.S. Marshals upheld the rule of law.”</p> <p>“I wish to thank the extraordinary women and men of the U.S. Marshals Service, as well as our state and local partners for their tireless work to make our communities safe,” said U.S. Marshals Service Director Ronald Davis. “The impact of these arrests goes beyond contributing to statistics. Every fugitive arrested for a violent offense, helps support violence reduction and brings justice to families impacted by that violence.”</p> <p>Total fugitives cleared: 95,425</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and local warrants – 61,161 • Federal warrants – 34,264 <p>The number of warrants cleared nearly always exceeds the number of arrests in a given year because fugitives are often wanted on numerous warrants, and a single arrest can clear them all at once.</p>

The USMS has a long history of providing assistance and expertise to other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies in support of their fugitive investigations. The USMS leads 56 fugitive task forces (representing more than 1,500 law enforcement agencies) throughout the United States and eight regional fugitive task forces. Staffed by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, USMS-led task forces target the most dangerous fugitives.

Notable Arrests in FY2022

On Feb. 23, 2022, the USMS Florida Caribbean Regional Fugitive Task Force arrested 15 Most Wanted fugitive Nyjell Outler, alleged to have shot one man and killed another while attending a gender reveal party March 20, 2021, in Washington, D.C. At the time of the shooting, Outler wore an ankle monitor and was on pre-trial release for a gun charge involving an AK-47 style rifle.

On May 9, 2022, a multi-state, USMS-led manhunt for escaped Alabama prisoner Casey White and his alleged accomplice Vicky White culminated in his arrest in Indiana. USMS investigators used their network of state and local partnerships and expertise to track the couple and bring the fugitive to justice once again. The 11-day ordeal garnered significant national media coverage and highlighted the fugitive investigative prowess of USMS.

On Aug. 30, 2022, USMS 15 Most Wanted fugitive Raymond McLeod, 37, wanted by the San Diego Police Department for the 2016 murder of 30-year-old Krystal Mitchell, was taken into custody by El Salvadoran law enforcement authorities without incident. McLeod confirmed his identity to members of the U.S. Marshals team and members of the U.S. Embassy, who were on the ground with the El Salvadoran local and national police when they took him into custody. Authorities had received a tip that McLeod had been teaching English at a school in Sonsonate.

Finding Missing Children

In May 2015, the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act was passed and clarified the USMS' discretionary authority to support law enforcement requests for assistance on any missing child cases. As such, the USMS assists state, local and other federal law enforcement agencies, upon request, in locating and recovering missing children, while focusing agency resources on "critically missing child" cases – those that involve a suspected crime of violence or where factors are identified by law enforcement that indicates an elevated risk to a missing child. In FY 2022, the USMS assisted in the location or recovery of 424 missing children. Since the passage of the JVTA, the USMS has contributed to the location or recovery of more than 2,700 missing children.

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HEADLINE	01/23 AG: stolen unemployment funds recovered
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3788875/9-3-million-stolen-unemployment-recovered-attorney-general/
GIST	<p>Attorney General Bob Ferguson announced Monday morning that \$9.3 million in stolen unemployment funds were recovered from criminals who defrauded multiple states around the country.</p> <p>Millions of dollars were found in multiple bank accounts, and most of the money had been stolen during the pandemic by “sophisticated fraud rings,” according to the Attorney General.</p> <p>The fraudsters used identity data harvested from data breaches to steal tens of billions of dollars from at least 11 states, including Washington. Through the investigation, the Attorney General’s Office launched a legal effort to reclaim these funds for the state with the assistance of these financial institutions.</p> <p>The Attorney General’s Office anticipates additional recoveries from other financial institutions in the months ahead. The recovered resources go back to the state and federal unemployment systems.</p> <p>“Our initiative is delivering results for taxpayers,” Ferguson said. “Fraudsters parked this money in accounts with banks and financial institutions all over the country. We’re going directly to those institutions to get it back. We are not slowing down.”</p>

	<p>The primary strategy used to get the money back was subpoenaing more than 35 banks and credit unions in an effort to identify accounts that received unemployment benefit payments from multiple states, accounts that received deposits of unemployment benefits to various people, or a mismatch between the personal information of the account holder and the person who supposedly applied for the benefits deposited in the account.</p> <p>The Complex Litigation Division of the Attorney General’s Office has recovered \$33.7 million stolen from the Employment Security Department.</p> <p>According to an article in the Washington Post, a federal watchdog estimates that the nationwide unemployment fraud totals \$45.6 billion. According to media reports, Washington’s Employment Security Department experienced approximately \$645 million in fraud – or about 1.4%. Washington’s total recovery from pandemic-related unemployment fraud totals more than \$400 million.</p> <p>To assist in the investigation, Ferguson’s office retained former FBI Agent Gregory Coleman, the case agent responsible for all aspects of the “Wolf of Wall Street” investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Juvenile violent crime surges
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/violent-crime-rate-juvenile-11674485556?mod=hp_lead_pos10
GIST	<p>A 13-year-old boy ran through the Bronx streets one May afternoon last year, chased by two teens on a scooter. Surveillance video showed him frantically trying to open the doors of an assisted-living facility. The scooter peeled onto the sidewalk and sped toward him. A 15-year-old boy riding on the back pointed a handgun and fired multiple times, police say.</p> <p>Nearby, 11-year-old Kyhara Tay stood outside a beauty salon after school, eating chicken wings and waiting for her friends to finish getting their nails done. A stray bullet struck the pavement in front of her, authorities say. Another pierced her stomach. She was rushed in critical condition to Lincoln Hospital 2 miles away, where she died that night.</p> <p>Violence among children has soared across the country since 2020, a stark reversal of a decadeslong decline in juvenile crime.</p> <p>In the U.S., homicides committed by juveniles acting alone rose 30% in 2020 from a year earlier, while those committed by multiple juveniles increased 66%. The number of killings committed by children under 14 was the highest in two decades, according to the most recent federal data.</p> <p>One consequence is a mounting toll of young victims. The number of juveniles killing other juveniles was the highest it has been in more than two decades, the 2020 federal data show.</p> <p>Kyhara was one of 153 victims in New York City under the age of 18 shot in 2022, the most in at least six years and more than the 127 total minors shot in 2018 and 2019 combined, according to police data. The 13-year-old boy being pursued was unharmed, authorities say.</p> <p>In New York City, police said 124 juveniles committed shootings during 2022, up from 62 in 2020 and 48 in 2019.</p> <p>“The tragedy here is that we’re talking about a gunman who is too young to be called a gunman because he’s 15 years old,” said Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark after Kyhara’s death. “These ages make you weep.”</p> <p>The jump comes amid an overall wave of violent crime in the first two years of the pandemic—particularly homicides and shootings—that swept through urban and rural areas alike.</p> <p>Police, prosecutors and community groups attribute much of the youth violence to broad disruptions that started with the pandemic and lockdowns. Schools shut down, depriving students of structure in daily life,</p>

as did services for troubled children. Increased stress compounded a swelling mental-health crisis. Social-media conflicts increasingly turned deadly.

Easier access to firearms for juveniles has also played a role, including the rise of [homemade ghost guns](#) and a surge in [illegal firearms trafficking](#). Heightened gang activity was a factor too in some places such as New York City, authorities say.

The nationwide wave began to ebb in 2022, but in some communities, shootings involving minors have continued to surge. In Washington, D.C., there were 214 firearm-related arrests of children in 2022, a higher count than each of the prior three years. Sixteen juveniles were shot to death last year in the district, compared with nine in 2021.

Dora Villarreal, the top prosecutor in Rock Island County, Ill., said she has never seen such young teens so frequently involved in shootings and firearms cases in her county of about 143,000. “During Covid, without school being a constant kind of stabilizing structure for many of our kids, that has helped lead unfortunately to this rise in violent crime,” she said.

Since schools reopened, the arrests have continued to rise. Ms. Villarreal said residual impacts of the pandemic—including mental-health issues, drug abuse and the breakdown of routines—have all contributed. In 2020, 36 juveniles were arrested for gun-related cases in her county. As of late December 2022, the number was 64.

Lashing out

Fourteen-year-old K’Mya Marshall could see the changes among the young people she knew in her West Philadelphia neighborhood over the past two years.

After months of isolation, teens became less able to cope with conflict and more frequently lashed out over small disputes, she said. With less to do, many also drifted deeper into social-media circles where guns and crime were glamorized.

Firearms were seemingly everywhere, as [gun sales skyrocketed](#) during the pandemic. Kids got them from family members, purchased them on Instagram for a few hundred dollars, or bought homemade ghost guns from other teens.

“They think it’s cool,” said K’Mya, a team leader at the Young Chances Foundation, a community organization that seeks to prevent violence. “They want that gun to define themselves and for people to be scared of them.”

Late last year, a teenage friend of hers was shot to death walking in their neighborhood. Their school held a 10-second moment of silence a few days later. Such mourning has become increasingly routine in Philadelphia as the number of juveniles murdered jumped to 81 over the past two years, from 52 in all of 2019 and 2020.

“My friend got caught in the crossfire just trying to enjoy her day,” she said.

Last year, a total of 117 juveniles were arrested for shootings in Philadelphia, up from 43 in 2019, according to police.

They include a 14-year-old boy and a 17-year-old boy both charged with murder after they were allegedly involved in a September gun battle outside a West Philadelphia recreation center in the middle of the day. Tiffany Fletcher, a 41-year-old employee of the center and a mother of three, was outside when she was fatally struck by a stray bullet.

The city council recently made permanent a 10 p.m. summertime curfew for teens from ages 14 to 17. “The new curfew law is meant to protect young people from being victims of crime while the City works

towards other measures that reduce gun violence,” said City Councilor Katherine Gilmore Richardson, who proposed the measure, in a written statement.

The rise in juvenile shootings hasn’t been limited to the biggest cities. Peoria, Ill., population 112,000, saw eight juvenile homicide victims in 2021, according to police data. In 2020, there were none.

Edmund Mallqui-Burgos, chief juvenile prosecutor in Atlantic County, N.J., which includes Atlantic City, said he was struck by several recent cases where young teens who seemed to be on the right track committed shootings.

One involved a 13-year-old boy who shot and wounded two men, ages 30 and 34, in broad daylight on a busy Atlantic City street before getting into an hourlong standoff with the city’s SWAT team this past July.

Mr. Mallqui-Burgos was set to charge him as a juvenile for attempted murder—in New Jersey, prosecutors can try juveniles as adults only if they’re 15 or older. But he found out that the boy had never been involved in criminal activity before, was working a job to earn money for his family and feared for his safety during the encounter with the older men.

“This was a kid who seemed like he was doing the right thing,” Mr. Mallqui-Burgos said. “This was not a gangbanger type of situation.”

The teen, now 14, said in an interview that he’d been working for the building’s manager helping paint and clean apartments last summer. There were often drug addicts and homeless people loitering in the building, the teen said, and that day he’d asked a man to leave who didn’t live there. The man returned with two others and threatened the teen and his brother. The teen, who said he had been traumatized after seeing a shooting in the neighborhood in the summer of 2021, recounted running upstairs to his family’s apartment to get a gun. After the men struck his brother in the face and attacked him, he fired in their direction toward the ground, he said.

“I kept having flashbacks of what happened last summer and what could happen to us. I’m thinking about protecting me, and protecting my brother. I didn’t know these guys,” he said.

He pleaded guilty to fourth-degree aggravated assault and second-degree unlawful possession of a handgun, and was placed in an intensive probation program.

Stricter punishments

Some prosecutors and law enforcement leaders argue that the shift away from a more punitive approach for juveniles toward intervention programs and rehabilitation has gone too far and corrections are needed.

Ms. Clark, the Bronx district attorney and a Democrat, supported a 2017 New York law that ended the automatic prosecution of 16- and 17-year-olds as adults, raising the age to 18. Most states had already passed similar “Raise the Age” laws.

Now, Ms. Clark said, she wants to be able to try more gun possession cases in criminal court, which would allow her office more authority over what sentences to seek. She said under the Raise the Age law, too many juveniles arrested on gun possession charges are being released quickly because such cases are typically sent to family court—and some of those minors are going on to commit more serious crimes or are being murdered themselves.

Her office cited the case of a 17-year-old who was arrested three separate times on gun possession charges and sent to family court each time, before being arrested for murder, all within 12 months.

“I don’t want to lock them up and throw away the key because they’re young. But at the same time, they have to know the consequences for their actions,” said Ms. Clark.

Last March, New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul sent lawmakers a list of priorities to help reduce crime, including changing the Raise the Age law to allow juveniles arrested on gun possession charges to be tried in criminal court. The proposal was never taken up by the Democratic-controlled legislature.

A coalition of children's advocacy groups in New York have fought such proposals, saying that there's no data showing a link between the law and rising juvenile shootings in New York.

"We believe that the increase was related to the massive disruptions and the trauma of the pandemic," said Kate Rubin, director of policy and strategic initiatives at Youth Represent, a New York group that works with young people who have been incarcerated. "The year before the pandemic started, Raise the Age was already in effect and shootings were actually the lowest level that they had been in years."

She and other advocacy groups said that early intervention programs for juvenile gun offenders remain a more effective means of heading off future violence than incarceration.

Arrested

Several days after Kyhara Tay's killing, police arrested the 15-year-old alleged shooter at a Bronx hotel, where he was found with his mother. Soon after, the 18-year-old driving the scooter turned himself in. Both had been victims of gun violence themselves, according to police. The 15-year-old was shot last January, while the 18-year-old, an alleged gang member, had been shot on two different occasions in 2020.

Both have pleaded not guilty.

Walter Fields, the lawyer for the 15-year-old, wouldn't comment specifically on the case, but he blamed the growing youth violence on what he described as shockingly easy access to guns.

"I've never seen it this bad. I've never seen the amount of weapons that have flooded the streets of New York," said Mr. Fields, who specializes in juvenile legal defense.

A lawyer for the 18-year-old declined to comment.

Before their daughter died, Yahisha Gomez and her husband, Sokpini Tay, had mulled moving out of their Bronx neighborhood with their five children for somewhere safer. But Ms. Gomez, a bank clerk, and Mr. Tay, a maintenance worker, were waiting to save enough money. They kept a close eye on their children, not letting them spend more than an hour outside after school.

Ms. Gomez got word that Kyhara had been shot that spring afternoon from her niece. She ran the 10 blocks from their apartment to the nail salon, the city blurring by her until she heard the sirens.

"I was praying to God that it wasn't her. And if it was her, that she'd be OK. Just praying, 'Please let me see her.' That it wasn't that bad. Just praying to God."

Ms. Gomez and Mr. Tay said their lives have been broken. She sees a therapist to cope with the grief. He refuses to leave his 3-year-old daughter's side and has been unable to go back to work.

The age of the boy who allegedly shot their daughter didn't surprise them.

"It's just kids killing kids," Ms. Gomez said.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Oath Keepers convicted of sedition in Jan 6
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/23/us/politics/oath-keepers-convicted-sedition.html
GIST	WASHINGTON — Four members of the far-right Oath Keepers militia were found guilty of seditious conspiracy on Monday for their roles in trying to keep Donald J. Trump in office after his 2020 election

defeat, nearly two months after the group's leader — Stewart Rhodes — was convicted of the same offense in a separate trial in November.

A jury in Federal District Court in Washington also found the four defendants guilty of two separate conspiracy charges.

The defendants — Roberto Minuta, Joseph Hackett, David Moerschel and Edward Vallejo — were originally charged along with Mr. Rhodes and other members of the group. But their trial was broken off as a separate proceeding by the judge in the case, Amit P. Mehta, because of space constraints in the courtroom.

On Jan. 6, 2021, Mr. Minuta, Mr. Hackett and Mr. Moerschel joined others in the group in forcing their way inside the Capitol, while Mr. Vallejo, who was stationed in a hotel room stocked with rifles in Virginia, sent frequent texts offering to ferry weapons into the city if needed.

The jury returned the decision after about 15 hours of deliberation over three days, and it came as a parallel sedition trial for members of the Proud Boys — another far-right group that joined the mob outside the Capitol on Jan. 6 — continued to play out in the same courthouse.

The decision also came just hours after a jury found Richard Barnett, a rioter who was photographed reclining in Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office, guilty on all eight charges he faced, including obstruction of an official proceeding and theft of government property.

The earlier trial of members of the Oath Keepers resulted in a more mixed outcome, with two of five defendants, Mr. Rhodes and a longtime ally, Kelly Meggs, found guilty of seditious conspiracy, the most serious charge. The jury in the earlier case acquitted Mr. Rhodes of two separate conspiracy charges.

The government depicted the defendants in the second trial as lower in the organization's power hierarchy than those in the first case, and more readily employed as foot soldiers for the group than as top operational coordinators.

Prosecutors had argued that on the day of the riot, Mr. Hackett and Mr. Moerschel joined a group of 12 others as the "boots on the ground," forcing their way into the Capitol on Jan. 6 with "brute strength."

They said that Mr. Minuta, a New York tattoo artist, followed shortly behind with a separate group that clashed aggressively with Capitol Police officers inside. Earlier that day, Mr. Minuta and his group had provided security for Roger J. Stone Jr., a former adviser to Mr. Trump, and rushed to the Capitol on a golf cart to join the mob and confront police officers.

"To Minuta and these people storming into the Capitol, they were patriots," Troy Edwards, a prosecutor, told the jury at the beginning of the trial. "And he was headed to join what he called patriots."

Federal prosecutors described how Mr. Vallejo, an Army veteran from Arizona, kept watch over an arsenal of guns stashed in a hotel in Virginia as part of a "quick reaction force" that could deliver weapons to those members in Washington in the event of a breakdown in the rule of law.

They also returned to some of the evidence presented in the case against Mr. Rhodes last year, poring over reams of text messages in which members of the group fretted over Mr. Trump's fate after the election and swapped outlandish conspiracies about Joseph R. Biden Jr. and what they described as shadowy international forces influencing him.

Over the course of both trials, lawyers for the Justice Department argued that the Oath Keepers had for months expressed a desire to help Mr. Trump remain in power even after his election loss, and that they had positioned themselves in Washington on Jan. 6, ready to back the former president as an armed militia if Mr. Trump authorized them to.

“These defendants, they perverted the constitutional order,” Mr. Edwards, the prosecutor, said in December. “They were willing to use force and violence to impose their view of the Constitution and their view of America on the rest of the country.”

Lawyers for the defendants echoed arguments made in the previous trial — that while members of the group often darkly discussed the possibility of “revolution” and “civil war,” they never put together clear or practical plans to enter the Capitol or stop lawmakers from certifying the 2020 election.

But they also characterized their clients as “rookies” who had been radicalized by right-wing media and Mr. Trump in the weeks after the election, and had merely responded to the Oath Keepers’ leaders in traveling to Washington, ultimately winding up in the riot.

In a statement on Monday, Attorney General Merrick B. Garland celebrated prosecutors’ work in the case.

“A jury found all four defendants guilty of seditious conspiracy, as well as conspiracies to obstruct the certification of the Electoral College vote and to prevent members of Congress from discharging their duties,” Mr. Garland said in the statement. “I am grateful to the prosecutors, agents and staff for their excellent work on this case.”

Dating to the Civil War era, the charge of seditious conspiracy has historically been lodged against a wide array of defendants, though it has been used sparingly because of the complexity of proving that a group planned collectively to oppose the government by force.

But the charge has become central to the Justice Department’s efforts to prosecute national organizations involved in the riot on Jan. 6, and with the decision on Monday, separate juries have now returned guilty verdicts for both top leaders of the group as well as more junior members.

Judge Mehta declined on Monday to detain the four ahead of sentencing, finding that they posed little flight risk. He opted instead to hold them under house arrest.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Looted art returns to Italy from US
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/23/world/europe/italy-art-stolen-us.html
GIST	<p>ROME — Taken together, the five dozen ancient artifacts displayed at Italy’s culture ministry on Monday would have made a fine archaeological centerpiece for any museum.</p> <p>The items, dating from the seventh century B.C. to the first century A.D., included well-preserved marble statues, red-figure vases, a silver drinking bowl, even rare bronzes. The artifacts, worth more than \$20 million, according to the Italian Culture Ministry, were back on Italian soil after having been seized in the United States by American officials over the past 14 months.</p> <p>Twenty-one of the works had been on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, as well as in private homes and auction houses, before being recovered by American officials, who acted on evidence that they had been illegally looted from archaeological sites in Italy.</p> <p>Gennaro Sangiuliano, Italy’s culture minister, said Monday during a celebratory news conference that the recovered artifacts were the “fruit of a collaboration,” between Italian and American law enforcement officials, that would not end with these 60 works.</p> <p>Italy has fought for decades to quash the trade in illicitly excavated artifacts, and strenuous negotiations forged deals for the return of dozens of works with several American museums, notably the Met, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Its efforts have picked up steam in recent years thanks to developments in technology, including easily consulted online databases and improved collaboration with American officials, and in particular the Manhattan’s district attorney’s office.</p>

Culture ministry officials presented two works on Monday: a marble head of Athena, dated circa 200 B.C. and valued at \$3 million, and a white-ground terra-cotta kylix, or drinking cup, attributed to the Villa Giulia Painter, dating to the fifth century B.C. and valued at \$1.5 million. According to a [search warrant](#), the artifacts were seized last July from the Metropolitan Museum along with 19 other works, many on show Monday.

At the time of the seizure, the museum said in a statement that it had fully cooperated with the district attorney's investigation and that its acquisition reviews have become more rigorous over the years.

"The norms of collecting have changed significantly in recent decades," the museum said, "and The Met's policies and procedures in this regard have been under constant review over the past 20 years."

Among the items returned was a fresco depicting the infant Hercules strangling a snake, which dates to the first century. It is believed to have been looted from Herculaneum, [a settlement buried in the Vesuvian eruption of 79 A.D.](#), and decades ago was tracked by investigators to the apartment of Michael H. Steinhardt, a prominent New York venture capitalist and a major ancient art collector. In 2021, after investigators seized 180 stolen antiquities valued at \$70 million from Mr. Steinhardt, he [agreed to a lifetime ban on acquiring antiquities](#).

The Italian government made a first request for the fresco in 1997, but it was only after the Manhattan district attorney's office became involved in the investigation that the fresco was returned to Italy.

"With the help of friends in this room, we seized it in a matter of months," said Matthew Bogdanos, the chief of the district attorney's Antiquities Trafficking Unit, acknowledging the successful collaboration with Italy's art theft police that has returned hundreds of objects in recent months.

As a criminal prosecutor, Mr. Bogdanos later explained, he was not bound by the international treaties that had been used in the past to negotiate the return of allegedly looted artifacts.

"The old laws only benefit bad guys," he said. "The bad guys operate at the speed of bandwidth, and we have to do the same that's why we operate outside the civil negotiating legal bureaucratic process."

Mr. Bogdanos said that under his watch, officials had executed 75 raids involving Italian antiquities and recovered some 500 artifacts valued at more than \$55 million.

Also included in the returned pieces was a piece called "Bronze Bust of Man," dating to the first century B.C., that Mr. Bogdanos said was seized from the collection of Shelby White, a philanthropist, Met trustee and board member. The Art Newspaper [reported](#) the seizure in December.

Now that they have been returned to Italy, several of the artifacts will join other repatriated works in an exhibit at a [new museum](#) dedicated to recovered art that opened in Rome last summer.

Then they will be relocated to museums near the ancient sites they are believed to have been looted from, "because their identity is linked to that of their community," said Gen. Vincenzo Molineze, the head of the Italy's carabinieri art theft squad.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Gunman in Calif. Lunar New Year shooting
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/shooter-dead-lunar-new-year-massacre-motive-unclear
GIST	<p>MONTEREY PARK, Calif. - Investigators searching for a motive Monday in the worst mass shooting in Los Angeles County history said the gunman was previously arrested for illegally owning a firearm, had a rifle at home, hundreds of rounds of ammunition and appeared to be manufacturing gun silencers.</p> <p>Los Angeles Sheriff Robert Luna said investigators had not yet established why 72-year-old Huu Can Tran gunned down patrons Saturday night at a ballroom dance hall he was said to frequent in Monterey Park, where tens of thousands attended Lunar New Year festivities earlier that evening.</p>

"What drove a mad man to do this? We don't know, but we intend to find out," Luna said.

Tran fired 42 rounds at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio, killing 11 people and wounding nine. He then drove to another nearby dance hall where Brandon Tsay, who works at the establishment started by his grandparents, wrestled a modified 9 mm submachine gun-style semi-automatic weapon away from him, Luna said.

Gov. Gavin Newsom, who visited Tsay and his family on Monday, was among those hailing him as a hero. The governor said hero can be an overused term that often loses its gravity, but he directed anyone doubting Tsay's courage to surveillance footage of him fighting with Tran.

"This remarkable young man who without any hesitation — though with moments of fear — took it upon himself to save countless lives," Newsom said. "Who knows how many lives he saved."

Tran fatally shot himself Sunday as officers surrounded the van he was inside. A handgun was recovered from the van, which matched descriptions of the vehicle he used to get away from the dance studio.

Sheriff's deputies from Los Angeles County searched Tran's home in a gated senior community in the town of Hemet, a little over an hour's drive from the site of the massacre, Hemet police spokesperson Alan Reyes told The Associated Press.

Luna said his officers found a .308-caliber rifle, an unknown amount of bullets and evidence he was making homemade firearm suppressors that muffle the sound of the weapons.

Tran had visited Hemet police twice this month to report he was the victim of fraud, theft and poisoning by family members a decade or two ago in the LA area, Reyes said. Tran said he would return to the station with documentation but never did.

The mayor of Monterey Park said Tran may have been a regular at the first dance hall that he targeted, and his ex-wife told CNN she had met him there and he offered her free lessons.

The death toll rose to 11 Monday after health officials announced that one of the 10 people wounded had died, the LA County Department of Health Services said.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn said it was the worst mass shooting in the county's history.

All except one of the dead were 60 or older, according to information released Monday by the Los Angeles coroner's office providing the first identifications.

My Nhan, 65, Lilian Li, 63, and Xiujuan Yu, 57, were the three women named. Two other women were in their 60s, and one was in her 70s. Valentino Alvero, 68, was the only man identified. Three men in their 70s and one in his 60s were also killed.

Nhan's family said in a statement that she was a loving person whose kindness was contagious, and danced frequently at the ballroom.

"It's what she loved to do. But unfairly, Saturday was her last dance," the family said. "We are starting the Lunar New Year broken. We never imagined her life would end so suddenly."

Authorities have shared little about Tran, who once owned a trucking company, according to California business records.

Tran's Trucking Inc. was based in Monterey Park and licensed with the state from September 2002 through August 2004.

He had a previous arrest for unlawful possession of a firearm in 1990 and otherwise had a limited criminal history, Luna said. The sheriff could not immediately say if gun arrest at a time when firearms laws were different would have barred him from owning weapons.

Los Angeles Superior Court records show Tran was married in 2001 and divorced five years later, citing irreconcilable difference. The couple did not have children, said they had no community property and neither side had to pay alimony.

In the uncontested case, Tran noted in a filing that he could not get away from work to attend any court hearings, though he did not disclose where he worked or what he did.

His ex-wife told CNN that they married soon after they met at the dance hall. While she is named in court papers, she asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the case.

She said he would become upset if she missed a step dancing, but was never violent toward her.

Tran eventually moved from the San Gabriel Valley, a melting pot for Asian immigrants, and settled in Hemet, a lower-income community of many retirees 75 miles (120 kilometers) east of Los Angeles in Riverside County.

Tran lived in The Lakes at Hemet West, a gated community off a busy road with a view of snow-covered mountains. The development boasts of amenities including a 9-hole golf course, a shuffleboard court and a dance floor. Properties listed for sale ranged from \$45,000 to \$222,000.

A neighbor, Pat Roth, told KNBC-TV that Tran said he was a ballroom dance instructor in the past and would sometimes show up to dances at the senior community.

"Didn't seem like he'd harm a fly, you know. He wasn't a big guy," Roth said. "He'd pet your dog when you walked by."

Hemet police had no records of any incidents involving Tran in the community or calls for service at his home, Reyes said.

The shootings during Lunar New Year celebrations sent a wave of fear through Asian American communities and cast a shadow over festivities nationwide.

The massacre was the nation's fifth mass killing this month, and it struck one of California's largest celebrations of a holiday observed in many Asian cultures, dealing another blow to a community that has been the target of high-profile violence in recent years.

It was also the deadliest attack since May 24, when 21 people were killed in an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tran is the second-oldest mass killer in the U.S. over the last nearly 20 years according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. The only older mass killer was a 73-year-old who murdered five people in Yuma County Arizona in 2011 before killing himself. The database tracks every mass killing — defined as four dead not including the offender — committed in the U.S. since 2006.

About 20 minutes after the first attack in Monterey Park, Tran entered the Lai Lai Ballroom in the nearby city of Alhambra.

Tsay, who was in the lobby, told ABC's "Good Morning America" that he thought he was going to die.

	<p>"Something came over me. I realized I needed to get the weapon away from him, I needed to take this weapon, disarm him or else everybody would have died," Tsay said. "When I got the courage, I lunged at him with both my hands, grabbed the weapon and we had a struggle."</p> <p>Once Tsay seized the gun, he pointed it at the man and shouted: "Get the hell out of here, I'll shoot, get away, go!"</p> <p>The assailant paused, but then headed back to his van, and Tsay called the police, the gun still in his hand.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Spokane PD: 3 violent assaults within 3hrs
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/crime/spokane-police-3-assaults/293-77854367-6ff9-4ae4-bea0-be23720b53c0
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — On Sunday, Jan 22, Spokane Police Department (SPD) officers responded to three different violent assaults all within hours of one another.</p> <p>The first investigation happened around 4:00 p.m. when downtown police investigated a stabbing that took place on the 900 block of West Main Avenue. Two people were stabbed during an altercation.</p> <p>One of the victims was able to walk to the Downtown Police Precinct to contact officers. The 16-year-old suspect was located and arrested for two counts of assault in the first degree and booked into the Spokane Juvenile Detention facility.</p> <p>About two hours later, officers responded to a second stabbing investigation near the area of the 30th block of West Pacific Avenue. Upon arriving, officers found an adult woman suffering from an apparent stab wound and provided medical aid.</p> <p>All in a matter of minutes, SPD officers located and arrested the suspect for assault in the first degree. He was then booked into the Spokane County Jail.</p> <p>A few hours later around 7:00 p.m., SPD officers responded to a drive-by shooting near West 4th Avenue and South Maple Street.</p> <p>Arriving at the scene, officers provided the victim with medical aid until paramedics arrived.</p> <p>No suspect has been brought into custody for the shooting and the investigation remains ongoing.</p> <p>All three victims from all three incidents were taken to the hospital with non-life-threatening injuries.</p> <p>SPD does not believe any of the incidents are related.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Sheriff: possible arson damages 9 trucks
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/south-sound-news/sheriff-nine-semi-trucks-damaged-possible-arson-parkland/5SQKSDMSOJGULM4KJDSSMOPEUM/
GIST	<p>A fire damaged nine semi-trucks in Parkland Sunday morning in what the Central Pierce Fire Marshal is calling suspicious and possible arson.</p> <p>Just after midnight on Sunday, firefighters responded to a report of a fire in the 11400 block of Steele Street South.</p> <p>When they arrived, they found several semi-trucks on fire inside a fenced lot.</p> <p>Crews took approximately 20 minutes to knock down the flames that damaged nine trucks.</p>

	<p>There were no reported injuries.</p> <p>According to Darren Moss with the Pierce County Sheriff's Office, the Fire Marshal found indicators that led him to believe the fire was suspicious and was possibly arson.</p> <p>There are no suspects at this time.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Teen found dead SR-509 ruled homicide
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/teen-killed-sr-509-seattle-homicide/281-6bef4080-743b-4083-94ab-c6be95c33770
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The death of a 16-year-old girl who was found dead along State Route 509 last October in Seattle has been ruled a homicide.</p> <p>Keyaleas Brewer died from asphyxiation due to strangulation, according to the King County Medical Examiner's Office.</p> <p>Brewer's body was found on the morning of Oct. 7, 2022.</p> <p>The King County Sheriff's Office asked drivers who were traveling southbound on SR 509 between the First Avenue Bridge and the 112th Street exit between 5-7 a.m. for any dash cam footage they may have.</p> <p>Tips can be submitted to CrimeStoppers.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Idaho murder suspect as WA data analyst?
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/crime/idaho-murders/idaho-murders-suspect-bryan-kohberger-interviewed-pullman-police-job/281-0b5c0b9d-3589-462a-bccd-86175e0e7312
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The man accused of killing four University of Idaho students in November interviewed for a research assistant position with the Pullman Police Department, according to public records reviewed by KING 5.</p> <p>Bryan Kohberger was one of four applicants for a doctoral-level graduate research assistantship for public safety and interviewed with Gary Jenkins, who then was Pullman's chief of police. The purpose of the position was "to support each agency through data management and analysis, and to position them for success when they seek external funding."</p> <p>Among the public records reviewed by KING 5 was an email Kohberger sent to Jenkins on April 12, thanking him for the opportunity to interview for the position.</p> <p>"Chief Jenkins," the email began, "It was a great pleasure to meet with you today and share my thoughts and excitement regarding the research assistantship for public safety. I look forward to hearing from you. Best regards, Bryan."</p> <p>The interviews for the position were all conducted online, and the position was set to begin in August.</p> <p>Kohberger is accused of killing Ethan Chapin, Kaylee Goncalves, Xana Kernodle and Madison Mogen in the early morning hours of Nov. 13, 2022. He was arrested at his parents' home in Pennsylvania on Dec. 30, and Kohberger's trial is expected to begin in June.</p> <p>Jake Opgenorth was sworn in as the new chief of police in Pullman on Aug. 13, 2022.</p> <p>KING 5 has reached out to Pullman PD about whether Kohberger was ever offered the position or if he accepted the role, but had not heard back as of Monday morning.</p>

HEADLINE	01/23 Seattle's 5 th homicide of 2023
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/downtown-hammer-attack-victim-dies-marking-seattles-5th-homicide-of-2023/
GIST	<p>A 53-year-old Seattle man died last week, six days after he was struck in the head with a hammer in what King County prosecutors say was an unprovoked attack.</p> <p>Shawn Grenzebach never regained consciousness after the Jan. 13 attack near Pike Street and Third Avenue, dying late Thursday at Harborview Medical Center, according to prosecutors and Seattle police. His death marks Seattle's fifth homicide so far this year.</p> <p>Prosecutors expect to file amended charges next week against Christopher Eugene Martin, 34, who was charged before Grenzebach's death with first-degree assault and robbery and remains jailed in lieu of \$250,000 bail. Martin is scheduled to be arraigned Feb. 2.</p> <p>The deadly bludgeoning occurred after Seattle police saw Martin waving a hammer and yelling at people on the street and Grenzebach using an orbital grinder to cut the lock off a bicycle, according to the charges against Martin.</p> <p>A Metro bus pulled up, blocking officers' view, but by the time one of the officers walked across the street, Grenzebach was unconscious on the sidewalk, the charges say. A woman yelled at the man's assailant, asking why he had struck the victim, and the officer saw him step over Grenzebach's body, scoop up Grenzebach's backpack and walk away, according to the charges.</p> <p>Another witness told police that after Grenzebach fell to the ground, the attacker stood over his body and said, "I told you not to do that" — an apparent reference to Grenzebach's efforts to cut the lock from the bicycle.</p> <p>That witness photographed the attacker and later gave his photos to police, the charges say. He told police Grenzebach was struck from behind — a statement corroborated by footage captured by video cameras on the bus, according to the charges.</p> <p>Martin had Grenzebach's backpack, as well as a hammer, when he was arrested nearby moments later, the charges say.</p> <p>Other Seattle police officers performed CPR on Grenzebach until medics arrived and took him to Harborview, where he underwent surgery for a skull fracture and later died, charging papers say.</p> <p>Martin, who has a lengthy criminal history, was charged in February 2022 with second-degree robbery but was released from jail in May so he could get treatment at a Port Angeles behavioral-health facility, according to Casey McNerthney, a prosecutor's spokesperson. The robbery case remains pending.</p> <p>The Jan. 13 hammer attack was strikingly similar to an August bludgeoning at Third Avenue and Pike Street, when 66-year-old Rodney Peterman was struck in the head from behind with a metal pullup bar. His attack was also witnessed by a Seattle police officer, and his alleged assailant, Aaron Fulk, 48, was quickly arrested.</p> <p>Peterman died a few days later at Harborview. Fulk was charged with first-degree murder and remains jailed in lieu of \$2.5 million bail.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Calif. police: 7 killed in 2 linked shootings
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/nation/at-least-4-killed-in-northern-california-agricultural-area/

HALF MOON BAY, Calif. (AP) — Seven people were killed in two related shootings Monday at agricultural facilities in a California coastal community south of San Francisco, marking the state's third mass killing in eight days, including Saturday's attack at a dance hall that killed 11 during Lunar New Year celebrations.

Officers arrested a suspect in Monday's shootings, 67-year-old Chunli Zhao, after they found him in his car in the parking lot of a sheriff's substation, San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus said.

Four people were found dead and a fifth injured from gunshot wounds at a farm, and officers found three other people killed at another location several miles away, the Sheriff's Office said. The killings occurred on the outskirts of Half Moon Bay, a city about 30 miles (48 kilometers) south of San Francisco. Corpus said the two locations were nurseries, and it wasn't immediately clear how they were connected.

The new year has brought a shocking string of mass killings in the U.S. — six in less than three weeks, accounting for 39 deaths. Three have occurred in California since Jan. 16, according to a database compiled by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University. The database tracks every mass killing — defined as four dead not including the offender — committed in the U.S. since 2006.

Officials believe Zhao is a worker at one of the facilities and that the victims were workers as well, Corpus said. Some workers at one facility lived on the premises and children may have witnessed the shooting, she said.

Corpus said officials hadn't determined a motive for the shooting.

Half Moon Bay Vice Mayor Joaquin Jimenez said the victims included Chinese and Latino farmworkers.

The Sheriff's Office first received reports of a shooting just before 2:30 p.m. and found four people dead from gunshot wounds and a fifth person injured at the first scene. Shortly thereafter, officers found three more people dead from gunshot wounds at a second location nearby, Capt. Eamonn Allen said in a news release.

About two hours after first responding, a sheriff's deputy noticed the suspect, Zhao, in his car parked outside a sheriff's substation in a strip mall and arrested him, recognizing the car by its license plate.

A video of the arrest showed three officers approaching a parked car with drawn weapons. Zhao got out of the car, and the officers pulled him to the ground, put him in handcuffs, and led him away. A weapon was found in his vehicle, officials said. The video was captured by Kati McHugh, a Half Moon Bay resident who witnessed the arrest.

The sheriff's department believes Zhao acted alone.

"We're still trying to understand exactly what happened and why, but it's just incredibly, incredibly tragic," said state Sen. Josh Becker, who represents the area and called it "a very close-knit" agricultural community.

Aerial television images showed police officers collecting evidence from a farm with dozens of greenhouses.

Half Moon Bay is a small coastal city with agricultural roots, home to about 12,000 people. The city and surrounding San Mateo County area is known for producing flowers as well as vegetables like brussels sprouts. The county allows cannabis farming in certain areas.

It's a majority white community and about 5% of the population is Asian, according to Census data.

"We are sickened by today's tragedy in Half Moon Bay," Pine said. "We have not even had time to grieve for those lost in the terrible shooting in Monterey Park. Gun violence must stop."

	<p>California Gov. Gavin Newsom tweeted that he was “at the hospital meeting with victims of a mass shooting when I get pulled away to be briefed about another shooting. This time in Half Moon Bay. Tragedy upon tragedy.”</p> <p>On Jan. 16, a teenage mother and her baby were among six people killed in a shooting at a home in California’s Central Valley.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Arrests: teens w/guns at Puyallup mall
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article271519777.html
GIST	<p>Two teenagers were arrested Sunday at the South Hill Mall in Puyallup while in possession of two firearms. According to police, the teens posed for photos with a shotgun in full face masks before putting away the gun and walking inside.</p> <p>Puyallup Police Department said an off-duty air marshal supervisor called 911 Sunday afternoon while watching the teenage boys take “selfies” near a vehicle in the parking lot, according to a news release. The caller followed them inside while on the phone with dispatchers, and, when police arrived, the teenagers ran.</p> <p>Officers apprehended the boys near the movie theater, police said.</p> <p>The boys, ages 15 and 17, were arrested on suspicion of two counts of being a juvenile in possession of a firearm and obstructing law enforcement and booked into Remann Hall, Pierce County’s juvenile detention center. Police said the older teenager, from Spanaway, had a Glock handgun in his waistband when he was arrested. The younger boy is from Tacoma.</p> <p>Officers were dispatched to the mall in the 3500 block of South Meridian at about 2:10 p.m., according to the release. Police said the 911 caller saw the teens throwing up what was described as “gang hand signs” in their photos while one held the shotgun. That firearm was later found in the back of the vehicle they were taking photos near. Police said the vehicle was impounded.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 US: Sinaloa cartel paid Mexico's top cop
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/mexicos-top-cop-being-paid-231700812.html
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — Mexico’s one-time top cop played the part of a drug-fighting hero, adding more than 30,000 cops to the country’s federal police force, but it was all a front, federal prosecutors say — Genaro Garcia Luna was really taking money from Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman's feared Sinaloa cartel to keep drugs flowing to the United States.</p> <p>“He also had a second job, a dirtier job, a more profitable job,” Assistant U.S. Attorney Philip Pilmar said in his opening argument Monday at Garcia Luna’s trial in Brooklyn Federal Court.</p> <p>Garcia Luna, 54, Mexico’s former secretary of public security, is accused of taking briefcases full of cash from the Sinaloa cartel while it was run by the notorious drug lord Guzman.</p> <p>From 2006 to 2012, under then-President Felipe Calderón, he ran Mexico’s equivalent of the FBI, consolidating his power by swelling the ranks of the federal police, Pilmar said.</p> <p>The cartel kept its billion-dollar drug operation humming by paying “to buy off the federal police, to put them on the payroll, to make them part of the organization,” Pilmar said. “The defendant took their cash and betrayed his oath to his country.”</p> <p>Guzman was convicted and sentenced to life plus 30 years in 2019.</p>

At Guzman's trial, cartel turncoat Jesus Zambada Garcia testified to personally delivering briefcases with millions in cash to Garcia Luna in a Mexican restaurant.

In exchange, Pilmar said, Garcia Luna leaked sensitive law enforcement information on pending arrests, let cocaine pass through checkpoints and turned his federal police officers into bodyguards, drug couriers and “armed mercenaries” for the cartel.

“Members of the jury, the evidence will show that the defendant, the person who was supposed to be in charge of fighting the Sinaloa cartel, was actually its most valuable asset,” Pilmar said Monday.

But defense lawyer Cesar de Castro said Garcia Luna actually did his crime-fighting job too well — and that the government’s case is based on the word of ruthless criminals seeking revenge for being locked up by his client.

“What better revenge than to bury the man who led the war against the cartels?” de Castro said. “These murderers, torturers, kidnappers literally get to kill two birds with one stone.”

De Castro said that the cartel members who will testify are hoping for lighter sentences and the possibility of a new life in the U.S. Prosecutors will show the jury “no money, no photos, no videos, no email, no texts, no recordings, no documents” to back up their allegations of bribery, he said.

Over his career, Garcia Luna met with top American law enforcement officials in the FBI, DEA and the Department of Homeland Security, as well as members of Congress, Sen. John McCain, former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and President Barack Obama, de Castro said.

He also helped bring in technology and equipment from the U.S. and helped implement a “huge database” called Plataforma Mexico to fight the cartels.

“This will be a very public and angry display by your government abandoning a strategic partner for years,” de Castro told jurors. “The government will help the cartels exact the ultimate revenge on those responsible for their capture.”

After opening arguments, the jury heard from Sergio Villarreal Barragan, a former Mexican federal police officer nicknamed El Grande who joined the Sinaloa cartel and worked for one of its leaders, the late Arturo Beltran Leyva.

Barragan described the cartel’s expansion efforts in the early 2000s and said Garcia Luna played a key role in their efforts.

Garcia Luna headed the Federal Investigation Agency, or AFI, from 2001 to 2006, and the AFI’s support was crucial in Sinaloa’s clashes with the rival Gulf Cartel, Barragan said.

In one episode, Barragan was tasked with stealing a two-ton shipment of cocaine from a rival cartel, which he did by setting up a highway checkpoint.

He and his Sinaloa crew took the drugs to a warehouse, where they waited for Garcia Luna and other high-ranking police officials to arrive. Beltran Leyva also showed up. The plan was to split the take with the AFI, giving Garcia Luna money in exchange for the police agency’s half of the drugs.

The money added up to “a good amount,” he said, about \$14 million to \$16 million packed in “cardboard boxes, the kind that’s used for office paper,” Barragan said.

The cash filled so many boxes that the AFI officials couldn’t fit it all in their SUVs so Beltran Leyva let them use his Suburban to help ferry the cash, Barragan testified.

HEADLINE	01/24 Oakland police: 8 victims shot, 1 dead
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/oakland-shooting-eight-victims-one-dead-californias-third-mass-shooting-as-many-days/
GIST	<p>Eight people were shot – one fatally – in Oakland Monday evening, police there say – the third mass shooting in as many days in California and second in the Bay Area on Monday alone.</p> <p>Police say officers were sent to investigate a ShotSpotter activation – gunfire picked up by an automated system – and "learned there was a shooting between several individuals."</p> <p>Officers got to the apparent shooting scene – a gas station adjacent to the grounds of Mills College, according to CBS Bay Area -- and found several gun casings but no victims, police report.</p> <p>Then police were notified of "multiple" gunshot victims who took themselves to area hospitals.</p> <p>Police say they're "aware of" eight victims – one dead and the rest in stable condition.</p> <p>The identity of the person whose life was taken was being withheld pending notification of next of kin.</p> <p>Police are asking the public for help in identifying and finding the shooter or shooters.</p> <p>The Oakland shooting comes after gunfire earlier in the day in two places in Half Moon Bay, south of San Francisco, left seven people dead and one critically wounded, and a shooting that took at least 11 lives Saturday night in a dance hall in Monterey Park, California.</p> <p>On Jan. 16, a 16-year-old mother and her 10-month-old baby were among six people shot to death in what the local sheriff called a "massacre" at a home in California's Central Valley.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 More mass shootings than days in 2023
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/mass-shootings-days-2023-database-shows/story?id=96609874
GIST	<p>Less than one month into 2023, the United States has totaled 36 mass shootings, according to the Gun Violence Archive.</p> <p>Mass shootings are defined as an incident in which four or more victims are shot or killed, according to the archive. The vast majority of shootings this year have occurred in the South, in states like Texas, Florida and Louisiana.</p> <p>Though mass shootings don't make up the majority of gun violence incidents in America, their impact on communities and victims is evident.</p> <p>Incidents like the mass shootings in Buffalo, New York, and Uvalde, Texas, continue to send cities into mourning and have sparked repeated calls for gun reform.</p> <p>The Gun Violence Archive tracked more than 647 mass shootings in 2022 and 690 in 2021. At this time last year, the country had experienced 27 mass shootings.</p>
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HEADLINE	01/23 Iowa school shooting: 2 students killed
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/2-critical-condition-after-shooting-des-moines-school/story?id=96617326
GIST	<p>Two students have died after a shooting at their Des Moines, Iowa, school on Monday, according to police.</p> <p>The third victim, a school employee, is in serious condition after the shooting at Starts Right Here, a charter school, Des Moines police spokesman Paul Parizek told reporters.</p>

Police later said the injured victim is 49-year-old Altoona resident William Holmes, the founder and CEO of Starts Right Here. He remained hospitalized in serious condition as of Monday night, according to police.

The shooting, which took place inside the school, was reported just before 1 p.m. About 20 minutes later, three potential suspects were taken into custody at a traffic stop about 2 miles away from the school, according to police.

The shooting was the result of an "ongoing gang dispute," police said.

Preston Walls, 18, of Des Moines, has been charged with two counts of first-degree murder, attempted murder and criminal gang participation, police said. Two additional people remain in custody as the investigation continues, Parizek said.

The victims have not been identified, but police said they were two young men, 18 and 16 years old, respectively.

A motive is unclear, but Parizek said the shooting was "definitely targeted" and "not random."

Des Moines Public Schools interim Superintendent Matt Smith said in a statement: "We are still waiting to learn more details, but our thoughts are with any victims of this incident and their families and friends. Starts Right Here is a valuable partner to DMPS, doing important work to help us re-engage students, and we stand by to support them during this critical time."

Mike Beranek, president of the Iowa State Education Association, said in a statement: "We implore our elected leaders to consider effective strategies to eliminate gun violence and pursue concrete solutions that will keep our students, educators and communities safe. Our schools need to be bastions of safety, not the recipients of violence. This needs to end. As a nation, we need to recognize this is a societal issue seeping into our schools."

A representative from the Des Moines Public Schools said Start Here is a "community partner of Des Moines Public Schools providing two services: helping to re-engage students in the district's Options Academy credit recovery program and supporting students no longer in a school building due to behavioral issues." The school, which began its partnership with the district in 2021, serves between 40 and 50 students, the representative said.

Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds said in a statement that she's "shocked and saddened."

She said she's seen "first-hand how hard" the school staff "works to help at-risk kids through this alternative education program."

"My heart breaks for them, these kids and their families," the governor said.

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HEADLINE	01/23 Ex-FBI official arrested: Russia oligarch ties
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/former-fbi-official-charles-mcgonigal-arrested-ties-russian/story?id=96609658
GIST	<p>A former top FBI official in New York has been arrested over his ties to a Russian oligarch, law enforcement sources told ABC News Monday.</p> <p>Charles McGonigal, who was the special agent in charge of counterintelligence in the FBI's New York Field Office, is under arrest over his ties to Oleg Deripaska, a Russian billionaire who has been sanctioned by the United States and criminally charged last year with violating those sanctions.</p> <p>McGonigal retired from the FBI in 2018. He was arrested Saturday afternoon after he arrived at JFK Airport following travel in Sri Lanka, the sources said.</p>

McGonigal pleaded not guilty to the four-count indictment unsealed Monday in Manhattan.

The judge ordered him released on a \$500,000 personal recognizance bond plus restrictions on his travel and prohibitions on contacting anyone associated with the case.

He was charged along with a court interpreter, Sergey Shestakov, who also worked with Deripaska.

McGonigal, 54, is charged with violating U.S. sanctions by trying to get Deripaska off the sanctions list. McGonigal is one of the highest ranking former FBI officials ever charged with a crime.

McGonigal and Shestakov, who worked for the FBI investigating oligarchs, allegedly agreed in 2021 to investigate a rival Russian oligarch in return for payments from Deripaska, according to the Justice Department. McGonigal and Shestakov are accused of receiving payments through shell companies and forging signatures in order to keep it a secret that Deripaska was paying them.

Both face money laundering charges in addition to charges for violating sanctions. Each of four counts carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

"The FBI is committed to the enforcement of economic sanctions designed to protect the United States and our allies, especially against hostile activities of a foreign government and its actors," FBI Assistant Director in Charge Michael Driscoll said in a statement. "Russian oligarchs like Oleg Deripaska perform global malign influence on behalf of the Kremlin and are associated with acts of bribery, extortion, and violence."

Driscoll continued, "As alleged, Mr. McGonigal and Mr. Shestakov, both U.S. citizens, acted on behalf of Deripaska and fraudulently used a U.S. entity to obscure their activity in violation of U.S. sanctions. After sanctions are imposed, they must be enforced equally against all U.S. citizens in order to be successful. There are no exceptions for anyone, including a former FBI official like Mr. McGonigal."

After leaving the FBI, McGonigal subsequently worked for Deripaska through a law firm representing the Russian oil tycoon.

He made at least \$25,000 working as an "investigator" for the law firm on the Deripaska matter, according to the indictment.

McGonigal then worked directly for Deripaska, getting an initial payment of \$51,000 and then payments of \$41,790 each month for three months from August 2021 to November 2021.

He told friends he was working for "a rich Russian guy," according to the indictment, and stressed his work was legal. In conversations about Deripaska, he would often be referred to by McGonigal and Shestakov as "the big guy" and "you know whom."

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Washington, D.C., unsealed a separate case Monday against McGonigal on charges he received \$225,000 in cash from an individual with business interests in Europe who McGonigal knew was an employee of a foreign intelligence service.

The nine-count indictment alleges between August 2017 and September 2018, leading up to his retirement from the FBI New York Field Office, McGonigal concealed from the bureau his relationship with this unidentified former foreign intelligence officer all while traveling abroad with the person and meeting foreign nationals. The person is described as an Albanian national who was employed by a Chinese energy conglomerate.

The person later "served as an FBI source in a criminal investigation involving foreign political lobbying" over which McGonigal had a supervisory role.

	In the court appearance in Manhattan Monday, assistant U.S. Attorney Derek Wikstrom said McGonigal would appear virtually Wednesday before a federal judge in D.C. to be arraigned on allegedly taking \$225,000 from the Albanian businessman.
	A lawyer for McGonigal has not responded to ABC News' request for comment.
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